

# Extras 671

## Chapter 671 Tainted Elf

"Ciela... is alive?"

As Rey uttered those words, looking at Kara's slightly stunned face, he realized he never actually thought about the fate that befell Esme's mother.

He never considered the implication of her being alive either—until now.

"Tell me more about this." His exhaustion instantly vanished, and the pale expression on his face brightened up instantly.

He led Kara into his abode, closing the door behind them as he listened to her explaining how she was able to piece it all together.

Talking to the Elders, narrowing it down by speaking to the Esteemed Ones, her investigation was very thorough. Still, even though Rey was very impressed that she could get such cooperation out of the Elves and pry into so much information, he wasn't really interested in her methodology

All that was relevant was the actual information on Ciela.

"You said they have her captive, right? Tell me more about that." Rey sat on his chair, opposite his bed where he told her to sit.

"W-well... yeah. In a secret chamber where only the Esteemed Elders have access to."

"And she's alive."

"Well... yeah. But it's not that simple." As soon as Rey heard this, he raised his brow and made a complicated face.

Kara took this as her queue to explain further.

"The Elves placed her in a state of Eternal Sleep. That is the highest punishment they can give to one of their own—forcing them to sleep until their life runs out and they die."

Since Elves had a no-kill Rule, they couldn't eliminate even their most severe offenders. However, by placing the perpetrators in a state akin to death, allowing nature to run its course over them, they had their own form of execution.

"So, she's not fully dead... but she's not really alive either..." Rey mumbled to himself, his fingers stroking his chin as a certain image flashed into his mind.

'Reminds me of Alicia. Did they use some kind of Curse, or is it just Magic...?' He couldn't determine that on his own.

"I see. Well, I better hear all of this from the horse's mouth." Closing his eyes and controlling his breath, Rey spread his senses beyond the confines of his immediate surroundings.

"I'd like to speak to the Esteemed Elders about this."

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[Moments Later]

"Please, Lord Rey... do not see her."

"She has become tainted—corrupt and unholy. Do reconsider your choice."

"We beg of you..."

The Esteemed Elders all had their heads bowed as Rey stood before a rather gnarled tree.

The tree stood at the center of a large room—at the basement of the Esteemed Council Hall. It had fireflies dancing around it, with darkness filling the expanse for the most part.

The little critters not only illuminated the ugly-looking bark, but also highlighted the worried faces of the Elves that were still pleading with Rey even as he stepped forward and neared the tree.

The room was plain, and it smelled of earth.

The grassy ground and perpetual darkness almost made it seem like this was nighttime. However, if one looked up, they would only see the cold hard ceiling that reflected the same blackness around

In essence, a starless sky.

"I've already come this far. I might as well..." Rey muttered under his breath and stretched out his hand towards the tree's massive trunk.

'I need to see for myself.'

Once his hand touched the tree, he did not feel any hard bark or rough resistance. Rather, he felt a rather slimy membrane that seemed to pull him in the further he pushed.

And so, he pushed even further.

Slowly, Rey began to get sucked into the tree. Offering no resistance at all, it only took him a few seconds to be completely absorbed into it.

And, once he was, Rey was transported into another space.

Within this tight compartment, there was nothing in sight but one entity. She seemed glued to the wall, completely naked, with parts of her body buried deep inside the black, slime-like wall.

Her arm was stuck in, up to her elbow, and her legs suffered the same fate, leaving her knees upward exposed.

A part of her hair was also sucked in, but everything else was exposed.

Rey could see all of it—from her bare chest, to her slender, malnourished body, to the long ears she possessed, and every aspect of her body.

'So this is why they didn't want me to see you, Ciela.' Yes, the one before him was an Elf... but she was one unlike anything he had seen in this world.

For one, her entire skin was ebony, having a slightly darker tint than Trisha's. Her hair, which must have been previously white, was now pitch black. Her ears seemed much longer than a normal Elf's, and that was pretty much the visible difference that existed between her and the others.

'A Dark Elf, huh? So this is what it means to be tainted...'

The scent coming off her was moldy, and even Rey could feel bitterness—along with a hint of sourness—ooze out of her.

He reckoned she must have smelled really nice at some point.

'If I ignore the tan and malnutrition... she really does resemble Esme—especially the Esme that I first met back when she was to be sold as a slave.'

They were so similar that Rey was thankful this one had a darker skin-tone. Else, their images would overlap perfectly with each other.

He took a few steps closer to the sleeping Elf, his eyes fixated on her every feature until he was mere inches from her.

Then, he touched her face and felt its roughness.

'She's been here for over sixteen years. According to the Elders, it'll take a few more decades before she finally dies off due to malnutrition and Mana deprivation.'

Regular Elves would have died at this point, but thanks to the heritage that Ciela had—the same one within Esme—she was more tenacious than other Elves.

And it was due to that very same identity of hers that she was being punished now.

"You became tainted after killing, and abandoning your duties as The Oracle's heir. Now, you suffer here forever..." As he whispered this, something inside him began to clench.

He felt a spark rising within him.

'I want to change that somehow!'

Chapter 672 Discourse In Solitude [Pt 1]

As he stood still, watching the woman on the wall, Rey remembered the words of the Elders.

He was reminded of her sins.

'Apparently, what is known as The Oracle is an amalgamation of the wills of all the predecessors that came before the current host, all of which will be embodied in one avatar.'

The current Oracle had the joint personality of the ones before her, and if Esme became The Oracle, she would suffer the same fate.

'I can't allow that. If she goes through with it... she won't be Esme anymore.'

To stop such a thing from happening, the only visible hope he had was the Elf that was currently before him.

'I just have to find a way to untaint her. But, even that seems impossible at the moment.'

Still, it was far better than the alternative.

Elves that were born compatible with the Oracle—like Ciela and Esme—were only born every thousand years or so. There could also only be one at a time.

'I can't wait for a thousand years, which means I have to find a solution with what I've been dealt with.' Rey gritted his teeth.

Unfortunately, he didn't have the ability to achieve that... yet.

'I suppose this is where my mission with the Dragons comes into play.' Sighing to himself, he pinched his forehead.

Even after investigating to this point, he wasn't any less confused.

'At times like this, I should speak to someone...'

Rey's eyes lit up the moment he had that thought. In the first place, coming to this land wasn't his idea, so why exactly was he agonizing over details like this when he could also bring his Familiar into it?

"Huu..." Leaking out a smile, he turned to leave the room of darkness, only turning his head for another brief look at Ciela.

'... Must find a way for sure.'

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There was tense silence in Rey's room as he sat on his bed—all alone.

Well, perhaps 'alone' wouldn't be the most accurate way to describe his state of affairs. He was with Emil, who constantly spoke to his thoughts, expecting a response.

Other than her, however, there was someone else too.

~I see. So that's what has happened thus far...~

The voice that resounded in the room was deep, and it dripped with evil. Something amusing seemed to dwell in his tone despite how serious it was.

"What should I do, Ater?" Rey stared hard at a communication device—a black box—that sat on the table in front of him.

That was where Ater's voice was coming from, and for some reason—despite it being a mere box—Rey kept his gaze locked on it.

~Hmm. My simple advice would be to simply follow as The Oracle says... at least for now. It's the safest option.~

"Right? I thought so too... even if it leaves a bad taste in my mouth."

~Indeed. This also coincides with the plan to bring the Elves over to our side, so if you assist them in this, it's not a total loss for you.~

Rey nodded and sighed.

The only major difference between the two cases was that he was initially helping them out of his own free will—mostly for Esme's sake, and out of his limited compassion—but the current situation was completely different.

'I'm being forced to help them. There's no room for error or casual action.'

This was a mission.

~Hopefully you find more answers there as well. I will look into things on my end to see how I can help your situation better.~

That seemed to be the end of the conversation, but Rey wasn't quite done yet.

He still had one more thing on his mind.

"Ater... about the scar on the land of the Elves..." He began, his eyes narrowing a bit more with every word he uttered. "Did you know about it?"

~....~

There was silence in the room for a few seconds. Not even the breathing from both sides could be heard. Everything simply fell into an absolute lull.

Then—

~I did.~

Ater finally replied with a low, nigh quiet voice. It almost appeared as though he was a little anxious with the way he answered.

"And you intentionally left that part out of your report, huh? Okay... next question." Even as he said these heavy words, Rey's expression remained mostly stoic.

He had no anger or other kinds of emotions displayed.

Other than hints of seriousness etched onto his features, he seemed completely neutral.

"Is Adrien the one behind this? Is he on the side of the Dragons?"

~Yes, Master.~

"I see..." Rey interlocked the fingers from both hands and bent a little as he stared hard at the box. A million thoughts had to have been running in his mind at the moment.

Once the uncomfortable silence reached its climax, Ater had to intervene.

~Are you... upset, Master?~

"That you didn't inform me of these things? No, I'm not. You always operate with something beneficial in mind, and that is what I'm trying to figure out..."

Rey could say he trusted Ater a great deal at this point. They had been through too much for him not to feel that way—

especially with the latter's track record and efficiency in his tasks.

Ater was completely loyal to him and acted for Rey's benefits.

'Yes, some of his methods can be extreme, which is why I have to make sure he is measured in any mission's execution. Other than that, though, he's pretty solid.'

So why exactly did the ever-so-loyal Ater hide all of this from Rey?

Well... he was about to find out.

~You are correct, Master. I kept some of these details hidden for a reason. I will divulge a bit of a synopsis on that now...~

"Go on." Rey's monotone echoed.

~Adrien is working with the Dragons for a reason that I am yet to decipher. I could go on with the details, but it would be preferable if I didn't.~

At this point, Rey's curiosity was beyond piqued.

He had to know more.

"Why?"

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### **Chapter 673 Discourse In Solitude [Pt 2]**

~I have incomplete information, so there's the possibility that you will be misguided and act on bias when you inevitably encounter him. I deduced you would eventually figure out that Adrien was here, and responsible for the demise of so many Elves, so I wanted you to witness it yourself and form your thoughts on them before hearing my report on the matter.~

"I don't think that's enough justification, though..." Rey responded to Ater with a harsh tone.

~Perhaps. But, I believe it would be preferable for you to confront Adrien without much of your preconceived notions—especially regarding the boy.~

"Are you telling me to trust him?!"

~No. But... give the opening for that trust.~

"What does that mean?"

~Have you ever sat down and listened to Adrien? Maybe if you did so, and the both of you conversed at length with as minimal biases as possible... the conversation could end up becoming very fruitful.~

"You want me to calmly converse with someone responsible for Mass Genocide?"

~....~

"Answer me, Ater!" Rey raised his voice a little higher than normal, and the calming effect swiftly took over and soothed him.

All of his growing anger and frustration with Ater instantly vanished.

~Master... do you truly believe that there is not a chance in the world that you could ever be in Adrien's position?~

"What?"

~Is there nothing that you would be capable of going to any lengths to accomplish... even if it meant taking the side of Monsters?~

"...." It was now Rey's turn to be silent.

He creased his brow and thought hard about what Ater was implying.

~You killed the members of the Underworld back then because you determined them to be a danger to the United Human Alliance. What if you found out the Elves were the same?~

"But they're not!"

~I never said that was the reason. All I am saying is that Adrien must at least have a reason for doing what he is doing. It all hinges on the deal he has with the Dragons.~

"So... you want me to give him the benefit of the doubt and hear him out?"

~That would be my advice, Master.~

Rey sighed, his frown slowly dissipating from his face.

'It's odd that Ater would take such a sympathetic role regarding Adrien. Still... he has a good point.'

With the Elves being the way they were, perhaps there were certain things that could push him to the edge. When he faced The Oracle, he actually even considered it.

"I'll try." Rey finally murmured out.

~Thank you very much, Master!~

"But, if Adrien is here... doesn't that mean he is aware of my presence in the land of the Elves as well?"

~You don't need to worry about that, Master. I have it all sorted out.~

"Ah... okay."

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After a series of conversation with Ater—mainly about what was going on in the Capital, and how it was being handled—Rey finally hit his breaking point.

His emotions were in a constant rollercoaster that it was a chore just to keep them in check.

It was eating at him at such an absurd rate.

Ultimately, Rey decided to sleep everything off and eliminate all the fatigue that had been building up.

~Master...~

Emil watched over him as he lay on his bed. Her black, slime-like form stood over him like a guardian angel, observing his every features... almost like a creep, in all honesty.

This had become her habit anytime Rey slept, and the serenity of the night helped her absorb more of the scene.

Unfortunately for her, this time would be different.

~Hey... Emil~

A voice suddenly echoed within the room, causing the Symbiote Slime to almost jump up in fright. Her jelly-like body danced as she screeched, turning back in an instant to glare at the one who interrupted her silent moment with Rey.

There was no one behind her. No one else was in the room.

~Over here, Emil...~

The voice came again, and this time, the Symbiote Slime had her attention drawn to the Black Box that still sat on Rey's chair.

Her slimy body slithered towards it, and while she had no facial feature of any kind, her sour mood was obvious from the way she moved.

~What do you want, Ater?~ She recognized the voice, and she also knew the only one who could reach Rey through the box was him.

She was certain it was him.

~How cold, Emil...~

~If you want to speak to Master, you can't right now. He's asleep.~ Her response was curt and downright prideful, a sharp contrast to Ater's smooth tone. Still, the man at the other end of the box did not lose his cool.

He continued with grace.

~I know. I actually called to speak to you, Emil...~

Emil swerved a portion of her slim-like body to the side, the same way a human would cock their head. She was, naturally, met with confusion.

~Me? Why?~

She and Ater had never spoken without Rey being present. In fact, she didn't fancy speaking to anyone that wasn't Rey, which was why she usually only spoke through his thoughts.

However, since he had been ignoring her so much... Emil was beginning to get lonely.

And so, when Ater gave her the attention she had been deprived of for so long, a crack began to appear on her little facade.

~Because I need you, Emil. Something big is going to happen soon, and I need a favor from you.~

More confusion took over Emil, though with her completely black body didn't allow them to be obvious. She shook slightly, though.

~N-need me? Why would I help you at all? Hmmph!~

~Because doing so would help Master as well. Don't you want to assist him...?~

Emil turned back to look at the sleeping Rey, and her expression softened slightly. She felt more inclined to listen to Ater's words.

Still, she was still confused.

~Why didn't you tell Master this when you were having a conversation with him earlier?~

~Because he likes surprises, and we both have to keep this a secret until the fullness of time. It's very important, do you understand?~

Emil still had questions, but her curiosity, loneliness, and eagerness to please took over everything else and she nodded enthusiastically as she drew even closer to the Black Box.

~Understood! What do you need me to do?~

## **Chapter 674 The Dragons' Camp**

At the heart of the blighted lands within the Elf Continent, near the Northern Shore that had now been completely desecrated—taken over by the strangers from another land—there was a meeting being held.

It took place within a tent, one of the many that stood erect in the barren land.

Unlike the others, however, this had a certain grandeur to it. This place was clearly the heart of their operations, and the arena where only the most elite of contributors could be gathered in.

The Grand Tent.

Its interior was several times more impressive than how it was represented from the outside. Perhaps this was due to its plentiful furniture and ample designs, despite it being nothing but a tent within a battle camp.

Even with the tension within the place, an air of regality still remained there.

Perhaps due to the exclusivity associated with the gathering that was currently taking place there, or the caliber of people present, the tent had a nigh flavorful vibe.

There was a massive and long table located at the center of the room, with three figures seated at the head of the table.

They were dressed in blue, purple, and ash respectively; though it was inevitable that they would have intricate designs on their attire. Regardless of color, these three were clearly the ones in charge of the meeting.

They were the only Generals present, after all.

The others who sat at both the left and right sides of the table were Dragon Commanders—all elite in their own right. They numbered a total of five on each end, making a total of ten Commanders.

Then, at the foot of the table was a certain young man.

He did not resemble a Dragon, as he had no horns or tail. His features were very human-like; though that was not the only odd thing about him.

The young man had an oddly twisted smile as he sat among the Dragons, his glassy eyes taking in what they were saying while maintaining proper silence. He also appeared quite young—about sixteen or seventeen years of age.

—Barely an adult human in this world.

Still, there was none within the room that treated him with scorn or disrespect. They wouldn't dare.

Why?

Because they all recognized his value. Discrimination against him would not only be unnecessary on their part, but also foolish.

"The days of those pointy eared idiots are numbered. They're being pushed back at an extremely rapid rate now." One of the Commanders, the one giving the report, said with a rather prideful tone.

Everyone who listened cracked a smile or a scoff at the subjects of the discussion. They all seemed incredibly pleased by what they were hearing.

"We estimate the conquest's progress will be brought right on schedule very soon. Within this week, in the latest, we would have completely taken over their camp."

They all chuckled at the news.

All thirteen Dragons belonged to the same group—one of the Elite Dragon Squads in the Empire.

In fact, they were hailed as the second best in the whole of the Empire.

That was, in part, the reason they chose this mission despite its intricacy and difficulty. If they succeeded, there would be no doubt about their placement in the Empire.

No one would dispute the fact that they belonged to the top spot.

"Congratulations! I'm very happy for you." The voice of the young man who sat at the foot of the table echoed within the tent, causing all its inhabitants to instantly look in his direction.

Since he was the furthest from them, their intimidating gaze focused on him at once.

Anyone would find it scary.

Not him, though.

"With this, you'll take the first step in cleansing the world of the Elves and finally taking over their resources. It will be a great victory for the Empire."

His response was filled with composure, and his attitude towards the Dragons—obvious predators of humanity—was all too natural.

Either he was a great actor, or he truly had no fear of them.

"Hahaha! Thank you, Adrien. We couldn't have done this all without you."

"Indeed! You truly made this easier for us."

"You've done a commendable job thus far. We owe you greatly."

The three Dragon Generals all echoed words of praises to Adrien, who simply accepted them with the utmost humility.

What else was he to do, really?

'I only saved them from making a fool of themselves and completely ruining any chance they had of ever ascending the ranks...' Adrien Chase smiled internally as he bowed his head in response to their very underwhelming words.

It was obvious that they were underselling his role in the current conquest, but what did he care? 'Their pride won't let them say it as it is.' His grin widened even more. 'But we all know that they owe me everything.'

Just months ago, the Dragons were in trouble due to the Elves upping their game and somehow getting their hands on the Enchanted Items. Having tools really revolutionized combat for the Elves, who had barely any combat prowess before then.

It was clear that the Dragons were desperate, and the Generals began contemplating attacking the Elves personally as a last resort—which basically meant they were pushed to their limits.

Their pride wouldn't have that at all.

'I initially came to this land to see if I could benefit from the Elves by offering more Items and slowly taking over their community, but...' Adrien closely looked at the Dragons before him with a sly gaze.

'I later realized these ones would be more useful.'

He was able to learn a lot in the time he spent here, even before approaching the Dragons with a deal. The advantages they offered him, especially in the long run, far outweighed his prospects with the Elves.

'It helped matters that they were failing to meet up with their conquest quota. There was even supposed to be an Excursion from their Academy, but due to how unstable things were at the time, they had to use every excuse in the book to postpone.'

The fact that they were forced to delay the request made by a Dragon Lord showed just how precarious the whole thing was at the time.

Adrien knew all of this by infiltrating the Camp and learning more about the Dragons and their dealings. He initially did this to possess sufficient information in order to further assist the Elves, but after learning all he learned—including something highly irresistible—he had to change his mind.

'In the end, I had to approach them with an offer they could not resist.'

By using his Necromancy on the Dragon Corpses, while also presenting the other Monsters he had in his stockpile, he was able to convince the Dragons of his power. He even offered them a demonstration, revealing just how merciless he could be.

He did everything he could to convince them, until they finally took the bait.

'And here we are now...'

This was his first time ever in such a meeting among the upper echelon. He would usually be called for an audience with one of the Generals, who would then tell him his task.

They rarely allowed him to give any counsel, or suggestions, or anything of the sort.

But, slowly... he worked his way to the point he was currently at.

He earned it!

'It's just as the Commander said. The camp should be completely taken over by the end of the week at the latest. Once we've taken down the last bastion of resistance from their end, things will be relatively easier going forward.'

Adrien was relieved about this, since he could finally take a break from all the work and focus on something else he had been putting off for a while.

'The Dungeon here... I'll finally have the time to harvest more Monsters to add to my collection. The Minerals there should also be very pure—probably comparable to what the Dragons have in the Northern Continent.'

Based on the climate and Mana density that the Land of the Elves had, Adrien considered it a very big possibility. 'Once I get some time off, I'll hurry and take care of it.'

With all of those thoughts flowing through his mind, he still didn't forget to address a rather pertinent matter to him.

"I am glad to be of service to the Empire's Conquest. On that note, I would also like to remind you of the deal we made. My reward... for the services that I have rendered."

His voice was soft and low, but there was a certain power that warbled deep within his tone.

"We understand, Adrien."

"An audience with a Lord, right? Of course... that will definitely be arranged."

"You will have what you seek."

Upon hearing this, Adrien's smile broadened—almost resembling that of an excited child—and he bowed his head once more.

"That is all I ask. Thank you very much!"

## **Chapter 675 Masterminds**

"Haa..."

Adrien exhaled deeply as he left the grand tent that hosted the meeting between the important figures of the Camp.

Upon getting out of the stifling place, he let the stale wind blow on his face, causing his dark hair to flutter gently while also inhaling the breeze with a small smile on his face. His eyes were closed for a second, but that didn't last long either.

He couldn't afford to enjoy the moment.

'Once again... my escort lurks behind me.' As his thoughts trailed, he glanced to the area behind him, where a certain pink-haired Dragon Commander stood still.

Her eyes watched him keenly, and while she had an official aura about her, the palpable tension between the both of them could not be ignored.

'Ever since I arrived here, she's been placed in charge of me. She watches my every action, especially the ones I make when I leave my tent.'

She was also very good at her job.

'I guess that's the perk of having an amazing bloodline and a powerful Skill to boot.' He grinned.

Of course, Adrien knew that he could evade her power if he wanted to. However, that would only be more suspicious and energy-consuming. 'Right now, there's no real suspicious aspect about me that can be brought to the light through her constant surveillance.'

The only reason her presence bothered him was because it was the symptom of a much bigger problem.

'The Dragons still don't trust me.'

This was an inevitable situation, and he was already prepared for this much. Still, he had committed to a lot in order to get much closer to their operations.

Still... it seemed they were yet to budge on the trust part.

'Well, trust or not, I'll get what I want from them. That's only a matter of time...' He began to walk towards his tent, with the Dragon Commander trailing right behind him.

The stale air brushed over his skin, and he found himself indulging in the exercise.

Even though he could get to the tent in a moment, Adrien decided to immerse himself in thoughts and enjoy his walk.

'Things have been working out well so far. My occasional calls with Justin keeps me informed on the current state of the Capital.'

The Capital was still under construction, though they were already making good progress with it. No real incidents had occurred as of yet, and things were relatively peaceful there.

The information was consistent with what he had learned from the Dragons during his stay here.

'Seems they aren't allowed to attack the Capital for a while. They've also reduced the intensity of their attacks on mankind... though that's only temporary.'

As for the other information he received from Justin, he had no real way of verifying.

Still... Justin could never lie to him.

'Rey is still asleep, apparently. Same with Alicia. The Otherworlders being recognized is a pretty nice step up. None of those improvements affect my plans in any way, though...'

Still, being aware of the current state of the Capital gave him some leverage in terms of information. His cautious self had to be aware of all the variables in order to determine the constant.

Only then could he be confident in the success of his plans.

'All of this means I can focus on my deal with the Dragons and swiftly conclude the extermination of those Elves.'

Once the Camp was destroyed, and the Dragons had quelled the last flames of resistance, his job was done. The colonization, slaughter, or whatever the Dragons planned on doing to the rest of the Elves, was none of his business.

'If there's one thing I don't particularly like about this entire arrangement, it's the limitation of my Skill on those Elves...'

Adrien didn't know why, but he couldn't make Undead Elves. He had tried several times, but the effects were always nullified.

'I've reached such a level of mastery where my success rate is a hundred percent when it comes to entities weaker than me. Yet... none of them have succeeded.'

To call the whole thing frustrating would be an understatement on his part.

'Still... I have an army of Undead Dragons and Monsters at my disposal already. That's more than enough to get the job done.'

Each individual Undead could be classified as an A-Tier threat, and he also had S-Tier entities sprinkled in. With such quality, his forces were practically invincible.

"Huuu..." Leaking out misty breaths from both his nostrils and lips, he finally opened the door to his tent and made to enter.

His eyes spotted the Dragon Commander watching him as he went in, and he only smiled upon noticing.

'All in due time...'

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[Meanwhile...]

"Good job, Justin. Keep me informed if there are any new developments in that regard."

The voice of a certain young teenager oozed out of Ater's lips as he held a certain black box in his hand—a Communication Device of the utmost quality.

He had a wide smile on his face as he heard Justin's voice respond to him with hints of subservience and respect. "Anything else?" He added.

"Well... there's nothing else to report. Rey is still not back from the whole Elf mission, and that servant of his, Ater, has been acting suspicious for quite some time... but you already know that. Also, I think there's some kind of political conspiracy going on at the moment. Things are so tense in the Royal Estate, with the Nobles still present. They're going to be leaving sometime this week, but... till then..."

Ater nodded slowly as he heard these words.

"Alright then. I suppose this concludes the session. At our appointed time, update me on even more information."

"Do you... suspect something big is about to happen?"

For a moment, Ater said nothing. He looked straight ahead, his eyes focused on a door that stood right in front of him. He had somewhere to be and something to do soon... but not yet.

"Do I suspect something big is about to happen? Haha..." He chuckled, his teeth displayed with his wide grin. "Why not just wait and see?"

"Still being so mysterious, huh? Why not just tell me these stuffs. It's not like I can betray you anyway..."

There was a long pause from Ater. He seemed to be suppressing a chuckle, perhaps from remembering something. Then... he spoke.

"Wait and see. Don't you just love surprises?"

"Well, I actually don—"

Before Justin could properly respond to Ater's final words, the latter ended the call very casually and made the black box disappear in a billow of smoke.

'Justin the traitor... what a rather interesting case this is.' Ater mused as he rose from his chair within the lounge that he alone occupied.

"There are so many ways to go about handling this matter. It almost makes me confused about what path to take. Which will lead to the most interesting outcome, I wonder..."

He licked his lips and walked towards the door.

'Well, I'll save my thoughts on that for later. For now...' Opening the door wide, his eyes caught the appearance of someone who was waiting for him while keeping his head bowed gently.

'... Let's focus on the matter at hand.'

The man before him was Rebal Blanc, known as the Head of the Reaper Group. There wasn't a soul in the United Human Alliance who didn't know of him. That went double for those who had positions of power—whether great or small.

He was the most popular man at the moment; well, other than Rey Skylar.

And this man was bowing before Ater.

Why?

"All preparations have been made, Sir Ater. The guests are waiting in the lounge, and yours have yet to leave the place you left them."

Ater smiled and nodded in satisfaction upon hearing all of these things.

"Well, we can't keep both sides waiting, can we?" Before Rebal could speak, Ater was already walking towards the room where he kept his guests.

"Sir Ater—"

"You don't need to think or do anything. Just observe and leave everything to me." He told Rebal, sporting his usual smile and composed demeanor.

"U-understood."

They reached the end of the hallway and entered a rather shabby-looking room. There, they found two exquisite girls seated comfortably in the filth. They had haughty expressions on their faces as they spoke to each other with confidence and composure.

"I can't wait till we finally meet those fools and get them to do our bidding."

"Master will be so pleased."

"And this waiting room isn't bad at all. It's definitely better than that hotel..."

"Indeed. Who would have thought humans could have such exquisite taste. I suppose Reta wasn't lying when she said she had connections."

"Speaking of Reta... when will she be back? It feels like an eternity since she went to fetch the dog that'll attend to us."

"Silly... it's only been like a few seconds. You're too impatient."

"Haha.. true... true..."

As these Dragon Ladies—Kat'erin and Shai'ya—kept speaking to each other, Ater and Rebal entered the room and they had no idea of their presence.

The latter had a horrified expression on his face. He could tell that the girls were confused about nearly every aspect of reality, and he began to fear that perhaps he too was under the same power.

What was real? What wasn't? He didn't know.

He couldn't!

He cast his gaze on Ater, who maintained his devilish smile as he drew closer to the girls. His shoes weren't touching the filthy ground, as he simply floated in the air.

"With this, they'll smell and look the part of slaves. Of course, I could simply make them appear so through illusion, but this is a lot more fun... don't you agree?"

"I-indeed, Sir Ater!" Rebal nodded and smiled, with beads of sweat falling down his face.

He was slowly understanding why his son, Asher, was terrified of this entity. There was no way such a being was human.

"Now that we've reached this point... shall we move on to the next stage?"

## **Chapter 676 Two Sides Of Madness**

There was silence on both ends.

On one side were the Otherworlders known as deserters—the ones who abandoned the Royal Estate and the selfless cause to save humanity. Their true status was, naturally, not known to the public... but that didn't matter here.

Lyvia, Byron, Devin, Cayden, and their leader Felicia, all sat on a particularly large and comfortable sofa. The exquisite design of the furniture only reflected the extravagant state of the lounge they occupied. The carpets were made of only the best of materials, and the walls were adorned with only the most elegant designs.

The chandelier glowed with sheer beauty, and everything oozed luxury.

The Otherworlders seemed to be using all their strength to restrain themselves from reacting to the scenery around them. Even the Nobles didn't have lounges that was so well-designed and ozed a taste of perfection.

Before them was a table of pure glass—almost shining like diamonds—and on the other side of the table were the people the Otherworlders had to deal with.

The man who sat comfortably on the sofa was a stranger—one they hadn't seen before.

He had dark ebony skin, with white hair and crimson eyes. There was something exotic, nearly forbidden, about his countenance. Even though he had a smile on his face, malice seemed to seep out of the mask.

Standing behind him was Rebal Blanc, the purported leader of the Reaper Group.

Now that they had finally encountered the true mastermind behind the Reaper Group, and knew of the sinister plans they had under wraps, the Otherworlders knew the one who sat before them was the real deal.

There was a reason why he was the one seated and Rebal merely stood.

That wasn't all, though.

Kneeling at the man's feet were two exotic-looking women—naked and in chains. They looked filthy and absolutely disheveled. Their horns stood out from their dirty hair, and their tails slithered on the carpet. Their soft-looking bodies were sullied by dirt of some kind, and their necks were tightly cuffed with chokers that had chains linked to them. Like dogs, they were placed on leashes, and the one who had control over their chains was the seated man.

He was their Master, and they were absolutely submissive to him.

"We meet at long last, Otherworlders. Names are unnecessary, so I will skip the pleasantries and get straight to the point."

Each word the man spoke carried authority.

The Otherworlders, despite supposedly being much stronger than the humans of this world, found themselves increasingly wary of this man.

Perhaps it was how he spoke... the way he carried himself... it was reminiscent of one who had absolute power and confidence at his disposal.

It also didn't help that he had two Dragons on his leash.

Felicia and her friends still found it a mystery as to how he was able to capture the Dragons, but they reckoned now wasn't the moment to indulge in their curiosity.

They had chosen to enter into the rabbit hole of conspiracy in order to further push their own plans, and now they were in too deep to have second thoughts.

The Otherworlders, allied with the Reaper Group, were going to take over the entire United Human Alliance.

"I trust that Rebal here has already given you the brief rundown on what we intend to do. I will go over things in greater detail, but only after we sign an arrangement of non-disclosure and non-interference. If, after hearing everything, you still refuse to join hands with us... then I need to be sure you won't ruin things for our end."

All things considered, the man's words made sense.

His caution was befitting of someone of his caliber, and the condition he was imposing was even mild considering just how much leverage he possessed.

Felicia stole one glance at her friends and they all exchanged nods.

So far... things were looking good.

"Excellent! Since we're all on the same page, let's get the whole paperwork done so we can finally get to the juicy bits!" He exclaimed with such aggressive grace, yet tender intensity that seemed contradictory... but strangely perfect.

All through this while, everything seemed to become a blur.

Still, even with everything that was happening, all of these deserters had one thought on their mind.

"We're going to use this opportunity and make a deal with the Reaper Group to get what we want. Once we no longer need them... we'll turn against them!"

Yes, this cliché logic was what ran through their inner layers.

And who could blame them?

Just as with what they had experienced with the Nobles of this world, and the lowlives they had to deal with to get to their current positions, this mentality seemed to work just fine.

And, with enough power and planning, they could actually achieve it.

'In the end, we're going to win!'

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"Seems like we've already won." Kat'erin grinned widely as she looked at the dazed audience around her and her partner, Shai'ya.

Everyone had fallen under the affliction of her [Dragon Voice]. Both the head of the Reaper Group, and the five Otherworlder Deserters, and even the incredibly attractive human Reta—though the latter was already under the Skill prior to this moment.

All of them were now Kat'erin's to command.

"Now, they'll do whatever we tell them to do, right? So we can tell them to simply destroy everyone and everything, right? Or to—"

"No, you idiot." Kat'erin chopped Shai'ya on the head before the latter could complete her naive-sounding suggestion. "It's not that simple."

The cute Dragon Girl made a cute shriek, holding her head as she stared at Kat'erin with a slightly betrayed look. Both of them soon burst out laughing, though.

There was no need to hold back in any way.

Everyone in the room was in a daze, so they could be free and true to themselves.

"None of these Otherworlders seem the least bit attractive, though. I would have expected them to have the same quality of appearance as Reta, but they're all ugly and filthy. Pfft... it's almost pathetic."

"Right? Still... they will be useful for the plan."

"Oh yeah! What's the plan again?" Shai'ya's airhead attitude surfaced as she cocked her head and looked at Kat'erin with curiosity.

The latter couldn't resist her sigh as she explained.

"We will have to consult the Master before we conclude on anything, but the most likely thing that will happen is to encourage them to go on with their plans so they can speed up the self-destruction of the Capital."

They didn't need to lay a single finger on the city itself, or even order the humans to do anything outside of their scope or intentions.

No... that would be a tad excessive.

"Since they're pretty much going to achieve something similar with their current plan, we just need to judge them a little..."

"Haha! As expected of you, Kat'erin... you figured it all out!"

"Pfft! Please, Shai'ya... I'm sure Master will have a more intricate plan than this in store once we inform her of the situation."

"True true. But you're still amazing, Kat'erin!"

"Awww! Thanks. I think you're amazing too." The two hugged after this, both their moods elevated by the current success they were experiencing with their mission.

What they both thought would be a series of boring and long investigations, due to their orders to remain lowkey and not cause any trouble, was now moving smoother than they had ever expected.

Even in the best of scenarios, things would not have aligned in such a perfect way.

"I guess we're just that good!" Kat'erin smiled as she nodded proudly at the whole situation.

More than anything she felt a sense of fulfillment.

'Master will be pleased!'

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'Master will be pleased indeed...' Ater thought to himself as he watched the whole thing play out, his hands behind him.

The Otherworlders were signing something they thought to be a non-disclosure agreement, but was something completely different. They also had a particular air of false confidence around them that was particularly amusing.

Especially Felicia. The girl must have thought she had some measure of control or calculation over the entire scenario, but she couldn't be more wrong.

Her lackeys had the utmost faith in her, without realizing what kind of awful mistake they were making. She was leading them to the guillotine, and they gladly followed.

But what about the other side? The Dragons.

The two girls were celebrating like idiots. They had gleeful expressions on their faces, acting incredibly relaxed despite being surrounded by eyes.

This was because of their illusion, and Ater was aware of that, but he still found it funny that—despite being completely naked, filthy, and left in an utterly shameful state, they were being so cheerful.

As their breasts flapped around and their bodies smacked against each other, Ater's smile only broadened.

He ignored the appalled Rebal and allowed himself to sink into his own thoughts.

'Phase complete. Now it's time for the next one.'

## **Chapter 677 Aftermath Of The Agreement**

The meeting ended on a rather productive note, with both sides getting what they desired as they arrived at a proper consensus.

Once it was all concluded, the Otherworlders were escorted out of the building and they returned to their lodge within the Royal Estate. As they did so, they couldn't help but feel a certain way—all of them remembering the day of their desertion.

As at the current moment, only Felicia had revealed her identity to anyone within the Royal Estate. The rest had their identities hidden, disguised as mere security escorts for the Nobles that they served.

As a result, they weren't treated with the utmost kind of respect.

All of that would soon change, though.

By the time they arrived at Felicia's room for their meeting, the teenagers were smiling to themselves.

"That went well. A lot better than I expected, even." The one to break the silence was Cayden.

He collapsed on a sofa as he grinned widely. As the one who was often referred to as the pessimist of the group, it was refreshing to see that even he found the meeting to have gone great.

Everyone was in stark agreement.

"I didn't expect the true mastermind to show his face. Like... I felt so overwhelmed."

"Right? It was too much of a shock!"

"And do you see how he controlled those two Dragons? It was crazy!"

At first, they were skeptical of whether or not the two girls were indeed Dragons. However, after a demonstration of sorts... there were no longer any doubters in the group.

That meant the plan was going to run rather smoothly.

"He did all of those things intentionally. It's called the power play." Felicia flailed her hair as she sat on one sofa—the one facing the rest of her friends.

A prideful look took over her demeanor, and everyone instantly recognized what it was.

She was pleased with herself.

"We're so close, guys. So close to taking over the Alliance and getting back at everyone who screwed us over."

They would reap all the benefits, while also having the current people in charge take care of all the hard work like politics or warfare.

As long as they had control... that was all that mattered.

"Shouldn't we bring the rest to our side now? Justin and the rest..." Lyvia said this, her emphasis on Justin due to the interest she had in him.

Everyone would have rolled their eyes, but she was actually making sense this time.

"Indeed. This is the perfect moment to reel them in."

"Of course, they'll have to be our subordinates... since we are the five original members who came up with this whole thing."

"Subordinate or not... as long as we're not enemies; it's all good."

They all looked at Felicia for a final verdict, but it was already pretty settled at that point. Perhaps they just needed validation.

"Justin, Clark, Belle, and Trisha... we'll bring them over to our side by any means necessary."

If Rey returned from wherever he went to, he would suffer the same fate.

If Alicia woke up, she would also be the same.

"They won't be able to betray us, and we'll be the single strongest unit in the whole of humanity." As childish as it sounded, the plan was practicable due to Felicia's Skill and the current plan that they had to take over everything.

"Looks like it's settled."

"Yep!"

"Agreed!"

"When do we start?"

The plan was going to take place within the week, which meant they had only a few more days to prepare themselves. That meant only one thing.

"We move as soon as possible."

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"Haaaa... amazing!"

"Yeah... that was so great!"

Kat'erin and Shai'ya collapsed on their side of the bed, with Reta stuck at their center, all of them sweating profusely after an intense session of sensual fun.

With the way the Dragons breathed heavily, one would think they had just gone through the most intense battle. And, in a way, that would be correct.

Their time with Reta was unlike any other.

The human knew the right buttons to push, and she was an expert at all areas. In fact, her expertise almost made Kat'erin and Shai'ya seem like amateurs.

It wounded their pride considerably, but they felt too much pleasure to protest at the moment.

Now that it was all over, they could feel the sting of shame on them.

Still... their bodies could not forget how it felt like, so their complaints were soon drowned by the pleasure they felt and desired to feel again.

"Haa... haaa... now that was a good stress reliever."

"Indeed. Indeed." Shai'ya, being the more sensitive one, was still spasming on the bed, not fully recovered from the round.

As for Kat'erin, she stood up and smiled with a sharp glint in her eyes.

"I think it's time we contacted the Master. We've made sufficient progress on the mission thus far, and we need her blessing and detailed strategy in order to proceed with any other action."

Shai'ya's words of agreements were stifled in her moans, but she was clearly in support.

Her weak thumbs-up proved that to be the case.

"Hehehe! She's going to be so happy with us. Still, to contact her, we'll need to head outside the Capital. It would be better to take all safety measures..."

"Y-yeah... uuuuuaooh..."

"Hm. Yeah..." Kat'erin smiled broadly, before slightly turning her gaze to Reta, who was fast asleep on the bed.

'The sex must have worn her out.' Her grin broadened. 'Humans are so fragile. I can't have her break so quickly... especially considering how much more we're going to have once we return to the Empire.'

All of that was secondary to the mission, however, so Kat'erin decided to shove it elsewhere in her mind.

"Shai'ya, hurry up and join me in the shower. We need to inform the Master as soon as possible." Kat'erin headed to the bathroom after saying this, leaving the other girl trailing behind her in a tweaking fashion.

"C-comingggggg...."

### **Chapter 678 Malevolent Call**

Within her clear and elegantly designed resident office, Frey'ja noticed a call was being made to her through a particular crystal-like sphere on her desk.

A holographic display instantly shot up, and the figure of two girls—her apprentices—popped up that very instant.

"Hm...?" Her clear eyes beamed, but her eyelids narrowed slightly at the same time.

She wasn't expecting them to contact her so soon, considering the nature of the mission. In fact, she was just about to have a meeting with the rest of her accomplices about a separate matter.

Still, considering how professional the two Dragon Generals were, and the immense skill they possessed in the field, she had no doubts that there had to be a reason for their premature contact with her.

With that in mind, Frey'ja granted them an audience.

"Master!"

"Master!"

As expected, her cute apprentices retained their adorable personalities despite the level of disgust they must have endured in the world of humans.

"Huhu..." Frey'ja beamed even brighter as they giggled with excitement, and she found herself laughing softly.

"It looks like you have a lot to tell me."

Why else would they call her? Yes, these two were the closest Generals to her, and they were also her personal unit among the 7 elite squads.

Every Dragon Lord had an Elite Squad except for the Great Dragon Lord and the Death Dragon Lord. The former didn't particularly need an Elite Squad due to his own level of power and influence—plus, he mostly acted as a supervisor or administrator, so a squad wasn't necessary.

As for the latter, he simply didn't desire to make a squad.

He was that weird.

Instead, he had a few powerful subordinates, but they were mostly disjointed and were appointed to different tasks. Perhaps it was due to his personality, or the fact that he also didn't particularly need a squad.

Either way... that was about it.

The Storm Dragon Lord, in charge of the military conquest in the Eastern Continent, had the largest squad of all... but it was only second best to the squad of the Frost Dragon Of The Icy Realm.

Everyone knew that her select few members were the most competent Dragon Generals in the Empire—though they hardly did anything.

Perhaps because they were already considered 'too strong' to take on anything challenging. Most of them had even taken on teaching roles in the Academy, considering their sheer talent and abilities.

Frey'ja was happy to put them to good use for her in the Academy.

'My Squad was number 4, but after the death of Ob'elisk's Squad, it has been shifted to Number 3. But, well... I have no idea what will happen during the next Evaluation. I heard the other Lords have begun making their Squads much stronger in preparation for the event.'

Kat'erin and Shai'ya were very strong, but Frey'ja wasn't sure they could defend their 3rd Rank position for too long. 'I might need to add more members soon. But... I'm very picky.'

It was why only the two of them were chosen out of the several candidates that existed. With the Evaluation coming up soon, though Frey'ja thought she would have to compromise.

'But... haa... that's not important right now, is it?' She removed her mind from the train of thought that she followed and returned it to the conversation.

She was right on time too, as the two girls just finished describing their experience in the human Capital. Despite being in her deep thoughts, Frey'ja still heard all they said, and she understood them just the same.

This was a testament to the advanced intelligence that Dragons possessed.

"There are a few surprises here and there, but I am pleased overall with your execution of the mission. Your speed is also praiseworthy."

That meant she would have to shift the plan forward.

'The sooner we get this stuff over with... the better for us.' Was what she thought to herself. 'I can focus on other things, like the kids in the Academy and the Evaluation coming up.'

"Let's go over the plan, shall we?"

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[Moments Later]

"You probably won't need any backup, but just to be on the side of caution, I will have some other Dragons be on standby on that day."

"Thank you, Master!"

Per the Dragon Emperor's orders, she couldn't have more than two of her subordinates in the Western Continent. However, thanks to having allies, she could request for their support and contribution of subordinates for the cause.

'Once the chaos begins, I'm sure the humans will try to escape the Capital. That would be perfect, since their protection is only limited to the walls of that city.' She grinned widely.

The moment they stepped out, the Dragons were going to incinerate all of them.

"Ahh... what a magnificent sight that would be." Pink hues appeared on her pale face as she drowned in the delight of the brutality that her plan offered.

"Keep up the good work, girls. I look forward to the results."

"Yes, Master!" Kat'erin responded with her stiff, slightly formal tone.

"We won't let you down, Master!" Shai'ya was a lot looser with her speech, but her tone still had reverence.

Not long after, the call ended.

The White Dragon Lord Of The Forbidden Valley instantly put a call across to all of her conspirators, and they began to pop up one after the other.

Their holograms manifested within the room within mere seconds.

"Tat'urius, Pro'theus, Vul'khan... I just received some fantastic news!" Frey'ja beamed at the mere display of her colleagues.

The Death Dragon Lord, Flame Dragon Lord, and Forest Dragon Lord respectively had looks of curiosity on their faces the moment she mentioned this.

Of course, she had to tell them more.

"The plan is going very smoothly. It seems the humans are already on the verge of destroying each other."

Uproar rose from the Lords at this point, increasing the level of interest and tension within the room.

"Looks like I'll have to tell you about everything first... about the Otherworlders, and what the Alliance has been up to for the past couple of months."

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## **Chapter 679 Crisis In The Camp [Pt 1]**

~BAM!~

The fist of one of the seated Dragon Generals hit the main table that spread straight down within the meeting room. His action caused the piece of furniture to tremble, almost to the point of breaking apart.

However, it didn't.

Whether this spoke of the integrity of the table, or the fact that the General was still subconsciously holding back despite his current emotional state... it was impossible to decipher.

"Damnit! How did things get to this point again?!" He raised his voice, his bloodshot eyes piercing the room as he looked at everyone present.

The 12 Dragon Commanders were utterly silent, all of them having nervous and incredibly uncomfortable expressions on their faces. Their unfocused gazes shifted from one point to the other, with beads of sweat evident on their faces.

No one liked it when this particular Dragon General was upset.

However, since they all knew the source of his frustration—which inevitably led to anger—there was nothing they could say.

All they could do was sit and take it all in.

"Just yesterday you said they were being pushed back. You told me we would have them subdued by the end of the week. You said they were not a threat at all. And now... what's with this bullshit?!" He raised his voice, once again pounding the table.

At this point, his colleagues had to calm him down.

"R'azak, calm yourself." The one cloaked in blue muttered with a sigh. "This unexpectedness plagues us all, after all..."

The moment he heard this, R'azak, the purple robed General, turned to look at his colleague, still growling and seething from his lips

"But—!"

"Getting upset won't fix anything. It's better we calmly assess the situation." This time, the one with the ashen robe spoke up.

All three Generals shared the same elevated position of leadership. Yes, R'azak was the one who often took the role of offensive leader due to his hot-blooded and incredibly violent nature, but that didn't mean the other two were inferior to him.

The one shrouded in blue was best known for his defensive maneuver; so he often took charge in times of dire straits. It was thanks to his leadership that the Dragons were able to hold out for so long despite the Elves gaining their hands on Enchanted Items.

That didn't stop them from being on the losing end, but he minimized their losses.

As for the ashen one, he appeared to be the youngest—looking like a teenager—but his true age was one that no one in the room knew of.

Many rumors floated around of him having some form of ties with the Emperor, but there was no concrete proof to back it up. The only thing people really knew about him was...

... He was strong.

Among the Generals, he was certified the strongest.

Still, he kept his role within the squad to a minimum. He hardly engaged in combat, and he only did so when he found it to be worthwhile, or if the opponent somehow managed to upset him.

Even now, despite the tension in the room, he was the only one smiling.

"U'riah, Ce'phas... what do you think about this, then? What other reaction am I supposed to make to the news that our forces have been decimated in the last strike?" R'azak spoke to the Blue and Ashen General respectively.

His teeth gritted with every word he uttered.

"How could they have overwhelmed our horde...? I don't get it. Were they hiding something till the last minute? Did we underestimate them? It makes no sense..."

The Commanders knew to be silent in this period, so none of them leaked as much as a croak to these questions that were meant to be rhetorical.

"Hmm..." U'riah rubbed his chin, stroking his well-polished beard—a sharp contrast to R'azak's shabby one. "I don't think they could have been hiding any secret weapon of any sort. Too many of them have died for them to not have shown all their cards already."

U'riah was right.

The Elves, according to all observation, were a very cooperative and compassionate race—at least to one another. There was no way they would allow their sisters to die in droves, only to reveal their hidden card now.

"All of these are just speculations. In the end, isn't it best we ask the one person who should know about what happened better than the rest of us?" The juvenile voice of the Ashen General echoed out as he cast his gaze on the most obvious target.

The one being referred to was seated at the foot of the table, his demeanor a mask of calmness despite the confusion that plagued everyone.

His dark hair danced on his face as he intertwined his fingers and tightly shut his lips in silence. Once Ce'phas mentioned him, though, all eyes slowly began to shift in his direction.

He was previously unnoticeable among the bunch—probably due to the arrival of the devastating news—but right now... he enjoyed all of the attention from them. "The forces we sent consisted majorly of your Undead Minions. In terms of military might, you have suffered the most damage... yet you seem awfully calm." Ce'phas grinned as he narrowed his eyes on Adrien.

"Does this mean you have an idea of what happened with the Elves? You know why they got so strong so suddenly?"

"No."

Adrien's response was curt, nearly to the point of being recognized as rude. Ce'phas didn't take any offense at this, though. Instead, his grin only grew deeper. After all, Adrien was about to explain himself even further... and everyone was waiting in deafening silence to hear all he had to say.

"I am very puzzled by this current development." He began. "Resistance should have been quelled, instead over a quarter of my Undead Stockpile has been eliminated."

Despite saying such tragic words, his face remained a calm facade—almost like that of a doll.

"One thing is for sure, though... and that is the fact that the Elves have somehow found another way to become stronger—increasing their threat level."

"So, what can we do about—?"

"I'll go." Adrien cut the Blue General off before he could conclude his words. The deep, insidious tone that he used nearly shook everyone within the room. However, Ce'phas could only chuckle in excitement as he watched the whole thing.

"It's time I personally went and see what's happening with my eyes."

## **Chapter 680 Crisis In The Camp [Pt 2]**

'It makes no sense...'

Adrien put on his best poker face, but he was actually stupefied underneath the face. To say he was completely discombobulated would still be a mild description of how he was feeling at the current moment.

'Everything has been going according to plan. I have made sure to keep track of all the variables, and I have painstakingly established the constants. So why...?'

Never before had such a thing happened.

As long as he planned sufficiently, Adrien had always been able to solve any challenge and make things go exactly as he wanted them to.

But now... now he was met with an inconsistency in his reality.

'Did I make a mistake somewhere?' He asked himself.

If he did, there was a chance that his conclusion would be flawed since he was working with incorrect information. The whole premise would collapse on itself.

But—

'Is that even likely? I make sure to be very thorough with my analysis... so it's not really possible, right?'

Adrien often made a conscious effort not to make too many assumptions or reference to the past, but he couldn't help but recognize his efficiency and absolute correctness in all his past endeavors.

He had never been wrong in his life.

'Yet... this happens? No, there has to be something else going on here. Something I couldn't have been able to factor into my premise.'

To observe that 'something', Adrien recognized that he would have to personally observe the Camp of the Elves—or at least, the battlefield.

That was the main reason behind his decision to personally oversee the next wave of attack.

"It could be very dangerous for you by yourself, though. The Elves were able to destroy the armada we sent their way. Are you sure you'll be safe in the next batch?"

Adrien felt like scoffing at the question posed to him.

Still, he controlled himself and smiled at Ce'phas, who was definitely asking the question in order to probe at him.

"I can handle myself just fine. Thank you for your concern." His cheery response was the only thing he made visible on the surface.

Deep down, though, Adrien scowled deeply at Ce'phas.

'He seems the most laid-back and carefree, but he's the most dangerous of the bunch. While U'riah is the most cautious and distrusts me the most, with Ce'phas it's different...'

Adrien could sense it—almost taste it even—the killing intent that the Ashen Dragon General was directing towards him, and only him.

'He wants us to fight. He knows I'm strong, and he is looking for an avenue where he can have a full-on brawl with me.'

That wasn't going to happen so easily under the current circumstances due to the use he had to the Dragons, but Adrien knew Ce'phas would strike if he had sufficient excuse to do so.

'I won't let him have a reason to, though...'

"You are our most valuable asset, though. We can't take the chance. What if another unexpected scenario occurs, and we end up losing you? We'd be sitting ducks, right?" Ce'phas turned to his two colleagues with a face of worry.

This was all an act, but none of the Generals saw it that way.

They bought into it instantly.

"T-true! I was also thinking of that....!" R'azak let out a stifled roar as he itched his shabby-looking beard.

As for U'riah, he calmly analyzed what Ce'phas said and nodded to himself.

"You are correct. It makes no sense to risk your life like that, Adrien. The risk is too great when we have no idea of what we are dealing with."

Adrien felt like clicking his tongue, but he held back his frustration with the Dragons before him.

'I know this is only partially out of concern for me. In actuality, they still don't trust me, so they would like to have watchful eyes on me.'

At the very least, that had to be U'riah's train of thought.

'But none of that is relevant at the moment. What matters most is the inconsistency, and what could be causing it.'

He felt an itch within him to fly off, right there and then, to explore whatever could be affecting his plans so negatively. That was just how much the whole thing affected him.

'But... I have to remain calm. I've come too far for mistakes...' He maintained his calm facade and nodded in agreement to the Dragon General.

"How many Commanders would you like to oversee me, then? Maybe two or—"

"Why not all of them?" Ce'phas blurted out with a bright smile, his wide eyes fixated on Adrien.

At this point, even his colleagues exhibited concern about his choice.

"All of them? As in all twelve? That's too much, even if we are—"

"Too much?" Ce'phas gasped as he slowly rose from his seat, pointing towards Adrien. "Too much to support our most valuable asset at the moment? You really think so?"

Not many could argue with Ce'phas on that issue.

Even the Commanders knew the value Adrien provided was far more than their individual worth—perhaps even their collective one... though that was a bit of a stretch.

There were a few who thought that, though.

"There's strength in numbers. If you're too worried to send all our Commanders with him, then doesn't that mean that any less would mean their demise? No matter how you spin it, it's more beneficial to have all of them go than to select a handful."

Adrien gritted his teeth a bit lightly as he heard Ce'phas' logic. 'He's not fundamentally wrong. If he goes on with this, there are two major things that will happen...'

Either Adrien wouldn't be allowed to go. Instead, a scout or some disposable pawn would be chosen instead.

Or

Adrien and all the twelve commanders would go.

'It's not like my hands are tied per se, but... it's not worth it. In the end, I'm only going for a scouting mission. If anything comes up, my safety and the safety of the Commanders will be my topmost priority.'

Of course, Adrien had to be prepared for all of it.

'I can't afford to make any slipups now.' He thought to himself, calming his heart in the process.

Nothing would stop him now—nothing at all.

'I'm already so close...'