

Extras 741

Chapter 741 Demise Of Deserters [Pt 2]

"S-she's dead...?"

Felicia's eyes widened as she stared blankly at the world before her.

As a [Harlot], she had a special Class Privilege that allowed her to monitor the Status of everyone who was allied with her—especially their living or dead status. Only about a minute after Lyvia vanished from the group, Felicia discovered she was dead.

'H-how...?' No, perhaps that wasn't the question she was supposed to be asking.

'Where did Lyvia get that ring? How was she able to defy me?' Felicia did not leave room for any loose ends, and that applied double for her inner circle.

All of them had been placed under the effects of her Skill, so it was impossible for them to betray her or act without her best interests. Yet...

'Did someone release her as well? Who? All of this is too confusing!' Still, it was good riddance to see that the bitch was dead. If she had a teleportation item, she should have used it for the sake of everyone—or at least, for Felicia. Still, there was no use crying over spilt milk or wondering about the dead.

'Lyvia is gone, but I can still make use of the rest somehow. I just need to find out how to escape this place...' A small smile formed on her face, completely oblivious of the intentions of the parties that still remained before her.

"We should interrogate them now—just in case any of them have further tricks up their sleeve." Brutus advised, turning to Conrad, who was already nodding as he stared at the kneeling group intensely.

"You are correct. Lucielle...?" As soon as he gave the subtle command to Lucielle, she smiled and worked her Magic.

As Grand Mage, she was privy to tons of Magic that most other Mages didn't know existed, and could not perform even if they tried. Thanks to her supplementary Skills of [Magic Application] and [Magic Mastery], in addition to her Grand Mage Class, she was the most skilled at Magic among the humans hands down.

"Let's see..." She walked gently towards the four, who were eyeing her with slight trepidation and unease.

They couldn't escape, and they couldn't plead their case.

Their best bet was silence.

"[Virtue Of Truth]."

The Spell was cast on them without much difficulty. Perhaps this was because of Lucielle's superior prowess compared to them, or due to her incredibly powerful equipment, or maybe the already weakened state of mind of the targets.

Either way... they all fell under the Spell.

'N-no! This is bad!' Felicia thought to herself the moment she felt the effects of the Spell seep through her mind.

It almost felt like she was high—with everything getting blurry, yet sharper at the same time. Reality became distorted, and her body slowly swerved around before finally coming to a full halt thanks to her hypnotized state.

Her mind struggled to break free from the Spell, but it was too late.

"What are your names, and where are you from?" Felicia, as well as her allies, heard the first question.

Less than a second later, they told the correct answer.

She didn't even need to think, or try to process the question. Her brain simply processed the question and spat out the required information, which was then delivered by her now loose and drooling lips.

'N-no... I have to stop! I have to stop this!' She cried internally.

The only reason Felicia surrendered was because they were going to be imprisoned first. That would give her more than enough time to understand their situation. She even thought she would be able to ask some questions that would better place her on the right track.

Not this... NEVER THIS!

"What are your Class, Skills, and Levels?"

Once again, Felicia and her allies spat out all the information without hesitation or any form of resistance.

If this kept up, it was clear what the next set of questions would be.

"Why did you do it? Why did you commit treason against the Royal Council?" The moment Lucielle's voice transferred the question, Felicia and her comrades already had their answers.

"To take over the United Human Alliance and rule it as the new leader." Felicia responded, and her words were followed by those of her allies.

"To become rich and comfortable."

"To get back at everyone who looked down on us."

"I just did it for Felicia..."

Nothing about their answers triggered anything—yet.

"And did you really think you'd be able to accomplish things by yourself? Surely, you must have had some kind of plan."

"We had a plan." They jointly responded.

"What plan was that?" Lucielle pushed on, her eyes narrowing on them.

Felicia begged internally at this point—praying that her lips would fail her. She didn't want to utter a single word for fear of what would happen.

But... it was too late.

"We partnered with the Rea—"

~SPLOOOOSH!~

The moment the group attempted to mention the names of the Reaper Group—their partners in crime—the bodies exploded into bits and pieces.

All, in a single instant, became fireworks of gore.

Lucielle was protected from the stain thanks to her automatic defenses, so none of the entrails and blood touched her. Sadly, they stained the pristine compound of the Royal Estate.

"Damnit..." Lucielle whispered underneath her breath. "It seems they were placed under a Non-Disclosure Curse before now. Any question that ties back to whoever placed the Curse on them would have resulted in their demise."

Lucielle sighed, shaking her head in utter regret.

This was the second blunder she was making on the same day—with the first being the escape of one of the Deserters.

'Am I losing my touch? That's bad...' Lucielle thought to herself, though she didn't really believe it.

Rather, she suspected there was just someone better pulling the strings from behind.

'But who...?'

There was no way for her to find out, but that didn't mean she wasn't somewhat determined to uncover the truth in her own way.

'Still...' Staring at the remains of what used to be four people, Lucielle couldn't help but feel both fascination and disgust for the malevolent figure hidden in the shadows.

'... What a mess.'

Chapter 742 Bloody Aftermath

In the end, all went according to Ater's grand scheme.

The Nobles, Deserters, and Dragons were all eliminated on the same day—each taken off the board in a rather spectacular, yet natural way. As long as the narrative that was spun remained effective, there would be no problem.

The Nobles were killed by the Deserters, hence getting rid of them and the annoying authority that they wielded in the Alliance. The economic and social impact their demise was going to cause made the Royal Council silently celebrate. The dissolution of their estate, the confiscation of their assets, as well as the massive creation of spaces in the South, would allow for a greater quality of life and less cost for those who lived there.

There would also be less resistance to the governance of the Royal Council.

As for the Deserters, since they were wild cards running around—with no allegiance to the betterment of humanity—they were more beneficial being dead. Since they were used as the scapegoats of the Nobles, it only made sense that their deaths would be seen as deserving.

Yes, the Otherworlders who were their classmates would feel uncomfortable if they were to be executed, but if they died as a natural consequence of their actions, then their demise would be more justified.

As for the Dragons, their elimination was inevitable, but Ater simply had to make the most of their involvement with the Capital.

After understanding the purpose of their arrival, and the rules that they had to abide with, it was easy to orchestrate a scenario where the loss suffered by the Dragons would be far greater than simply killing them.

It would also serve to help him better understand certain things he was lacking in.

Needless to say... it was a great success.

'And now...' Ater thought to himself as he remained in the darkness. '... To prepare for the epilogue to this game.'

The last thing he hoped to achieve with his involvement was underway.

'Ahh... I can't wait.'

Tremors.

Frey'ja, the White Dragon Lord Of The Forbidden Valley, was experiencing tremors throughout her body as she stood before a certain figure.

She was in her domain—possessing all the advantage that any Dragon would in their place of power—yet she felt helpless. The entity before her was a Dragon like herself, but the gap in abilities between them was enough to make her body shake.

She tried to speak, but words wouldn't come out.

Her lips shook as her eyes were fixed down, unable to look at the being's face.

"The Emperor is not pleased..." The voice of the aged man echoed into the air, causing her skin to nearly jump.

The Great Old Dragon Lord usually had a calm, collected voice, and that was still present in the way he spoke to Frey'ja. But, there was also something else attached to his tone.

It was silent rage.

"Your subordinates broke the rules of the Emperor, Frey'ja. It is to my understanding that they were in the Capital per your orders."

'I-I never told them to attack humans there! I warned them!' Frey'ja wanted to scream out, but she didn't dare speak now—interrupting the Great Old Dragon Lord.

"You also had co-conspirators: Tat'urious, Pro'theus, and Vul'khan. I already paid them a visit and exterminated them."

Frey'ja had to swallow her shriek the moment she heard that.

"That's right, Frey'ja. They are all dead... all thanks to your indiscretion." As he said this, the Great Old Dragon took a step closer to the shaking Lord.

She seemed to be nothing more than a frightened child in his presence.

Who could blame her? If the co-conspirators were killed without mercy, what was to befall the one who brought them all together? Frey'ja had a single thought etched in her mind as the Great Old Dragon drew even closer.

'What will my fate be?'

"The Emperor has no need for subordinates who can not follow simple orders. You are better off dead than alive—for the benefit of the Empire, of course."

At this point, Frey'ja fell to her knees and pressed her forehead against the ground, desperate to live. "H-have mercy! P-please... Please have mercy!"

She already knew that the Great Old Dragon Lord was not interested in any explanation or excuse. The others must have also tried to plead their case, but he eliminated them anyway. Even pleading for her life was useless at this point.

Yet... YET...!

"I will serve the Emperor even more diligently than I have in the past! I swear it! Please give me another chance!" Frey'ja already knew she couldn't win against the Dragon before her.

He was too ancient—almost as ancient as the Dragon Emperor himself.

"H-have mer—!" Before she realized it, her neck was being tightly held by the strong hand of the Great Old Dragon, and he effortlessly raised her into the air.

His grip was firm and inescapable, and his arm was steady and unmoving—almost like a statue.

"P-please... me-mercy..." Tears fell from Frey'ja's eyes as she was met with the unfeeling gaze of the Old One.

"Hm. You do not need to beg for your life, Frey'ja. I never had any intention of killing you."

"E-eh...?"

Both relief and shock instantly appeared on her face. It wasn't like she wasn't happy that she was being spared, but she was confused as to the reason.

"You still remain a valuable educator in the Academy, and the young ones have grown quite attached to you. They're at a pivotal moment in their education at the moment, as you are well aware, so taking you off the board right now would be unwise..." This could have been the sentiment of an old man speaking, but Frey'ja gladly took it regardless. "Thank you so much! I won't let you down! I promi—!"

"Still, I have to take something from you... or it wouldn't be fair." The Great Old Dragon Lord stared deep into Frey'ja's moist blue eyes and smiled for the first time since he appeared before her.

"You have good eyes..."

It was slow and excruciating, the plucking out of just one of her crystal-like eyes. This was mercy, compared to what was meted out to her colleagues, but Frey'ja still felt every ounce of pain that it brought to her.

She could not stop screaming in horror and agony.

"ARRRGHHHHHHHHH!!!"

Chapter 743 Rey's Sendoff

'How time flies...'

Rey smiled to himself as he stood by himself, facing a crowd of Elves that had escorted him to the very edge of their Community. He had wanted to take a small walk on his last day here, and it seemed everyone was somehow made aware of that.

The Young Ones, Elders, and Esteemed Elders all gathered in his presence and took the walk with him until he got to the Community's boundary.

Then, looking at all of them now, he couldn't help but smile.

'The past few days have been a mixed bag. It's been fun learning even more about the Elves and exploring their land a little, but it's also been...' Rey set his eyes on one of the two people that stood in front of the crowd.

It was Esme.

'... Awkward.' They hadn't really spoken ever since she told him she needed space from him, and he didn't think they were going to say anything before he departed. They often relayed communication through eye signals, or by using Kara—who was currently right beside Esme—as an intermediary.

'Kara and Esme will be staying behind to continue the work I started here. They'll also be overseeing the exploration and exploitation process in the land.' That meant, despite the three of them arriving in the Community together... only he would be returning.

Rey reckoned he might have to bring in more workers at a later time, but he couldn't just bring strangers into Elven Land—especially when they had just gotten used to Kara and Esme.

'For now, we'll use Golems and Elementals for the tasks, while Esme and Kara will manage.' Rey, of course, would do his best to remain in the loop of things, so the whole thing was supposed to go smoothly.

'And in the case of another Dragon Invasion, I'll be sure to look out for any signs...'

Having done all he could on his part, making all the preparations necessary for his absence, Rey reckoned he had nothing left to do in the Elf Community. In fact... that had been the case for over a day now.

Yet, he had intentionally delayed up until this moment for two major reasons.

The most obvious one was that he was hoping to somehow make up with Esme before he left, but since he decided not to push too hard—out of consideration for her feelings—the efforts at reconciliation had to come from her.

And it didn't seem like she planned to do that anytime soon.

Then, as for the second reason—

'I'm nervous, no, scared, about seeing Alicia. I... I don't even know what to say when I see her.' His thoughts were slightly convoluted regarding her case.

Alicia had found out in the worst possible way that Rey was Ralyks, and that he was secretly strong. Afterward, she fell into a coma—unable to properly process all of that information.

'Unlike the others, who had enough time to digest everything while I was in a coma, this is like the opposite.' And that was what frightened Rey the most.

It was why he had hung around the Elf Community for so long, even after he was supposed to have returned home by all logic. However, since there was only so much escapism he could employ, Rey was finally able to deal with his feelings and sort out his thoughts.

He was now ready to face whatever waited for him in the Capital.

"Once again, I'm grateful for the sendoff." Rey spoke to the crowd of cheering Elves, who cheered even louder once he spoke.

He no longer needed to use his scent to command obedience. The mere fact that he saved them and ended the war that would have caused their destruction—at least, according to them—meant he was already a savior in their eyes.

His allies—Esme and Kara—were also viewed similarly, though with less reverence than Rey himself. Despite being a Half Elf, there was no discrimination against her any longer.

When Rey asked about the reason for their sudden change in treatment towards Esme, still suspecting that they were only being nice to her because he was still around, he got a single response.

"The Oracle has touched her. She is pure."

Rey remembered The Oracle indeed touching her, so perhaps that changed something about Esme. However, for all he could see, she looked the same. Her Status Window also labeled her as a Half Elf, so there was no real difference.

Still, the fact that Esme was now accepted by her people made him glad.

'Even though she can no longer be The Oracle and help them from above, she can still help them right here.' And that was most likely enough for her.

With Esme now slowly integrating herself into Elven Culture, and the progression of their plans for the Eastern Continent underway, Rey once again thought this was the perfect time to depart.

'I gained a lot of things, but I also lost quite a few as well...' It left a bitter taste in his mouth, but he received consolation by telling himself that the mission was never meant to be straightforward. Hence, he had to take his victories with his losses.

~VWUUUSH!~

A sparkling portal opened up behind Rey, with distortions affecting the space around him.

"FAREWELL, SIR REY!"

"WE'LL MISS YOU!"

"COME BACK SOON!"

Cheers and words echoed in the air like chants, and it warmed Rey's heart the moment he was about to depart.

Then—

"Master Waaaaaiiiiiittttt!!!" A loud voice suddenly pierced the air, causing everyone in the bustling crowd to fall silent almost instantly.

"Wait for me, Masteeeeerrrr!"

The voice was loud, but it was difficult to discern its location.

Was it coming from the left? Right? Behind? Forward? No... none of those things. The echoes that permeated throughout the Community had only one point of Origin—

"Masteeeeerrrr!!!"

—Above!

Landing right in front of the slightly stunned Rey was the Symbiote Slime, Emil.

Her soft, round body bounced with finesse as soon as she scored the landing, and she jumped to Rey's face the moment she appeared before him, having wide open eyes with tears streaming out of them and a bright smile on her face.

"I've missed you so much, Master!"

Chapter 744 Emil's Comeback

"...."

A moment of silence existed between Master—correction, former Master—and the renegade Familiar.

The tension in the air was palpable, and even though Emil leaped to Rey's head, she was bounced back by a resistance she would not leap through—sending her crashing back to the ground that she now bounced on.

The expressions on the faces of Rey and Emil were like night and day.

While Emil had an optimistic vibe around her—a sincere expression of love and devotion—Rey's face darkened almost instantly. He gave her a cold glare and didn't even move from his position.

"Maste—!"

"What are you doing here?" Was the first thing that proceeded from Rey's lips the moment he couldn't handle the silence anymore.

There were several things he wanted to tell her—many of which were a lot harsher than the question—but his calm mind allowed him to still be reasonable.

"W-why is Master being so mean to me? I just—"

"Stop calling me that! Don't you have a new Master already? Why don't you go and meet Adrien?"

"...." For a moment, Emil had a blank expression on her face.

It seemed like she was confused by Rey's attitude towards her, which further confused Rey. He had already resolved within himself to kill Emil when next he saw her, since she was too dangerous to be allowed to live, but her current behavior was throwing him off.

He felt too conflicted to even properly respond to her strange behavior.

He also couldn't rely on the audience to judge the matter for him, since none of them knew about what happened between him and Emil. They appeared just as lost as he was, so the entire area was just a stadium of silence.

This did not last for long, though.

"U-uuu... W-why is Master being so mean to me? I've always been on your side, Master!" Rey found that very doubtful, considering how she sucked all of his Mana and nearly killed him and Esme. Now that he thought about it, Emil must have known that he would survive, so maybe she was targeting Esme from the start.

Either way, she betrayed him in the worst possible way and went to Adrien's side.

'Why am I even still talking to her? She could still be working for Adrien at this point, and all of this could be some kind of trap.'

Rey would have granted more credence to this suspicion of his if Emil wasn't behaving so stupidly. None of her actions had any logical ground, and Adrien definitely didn't operate in such a way.

Besides, her Status Window showed that she wasn't bonded with anyone.

'Of course, all of this could still be some ploy by Adrien—using her immature mind to throw me off and lower my guard. To what end, though?'

"You're so mean, Master!" Emil cried out, breaking Rey from his inner thoughts. "Why are you still suspecting me, even after everything? I never betrayed you!"

"Then what do you call what you did with Adrien?"

"I-It's... a secret..."

Rey raised his eyebrows at this point, growing slightly more impatient with Emil. "A secret?"

"Y-yes! I heard you like surprises, so... tadah!"

"What the hell are you talking about, Emul?" Rey felt he was nearing his limits, but the System quickly corrected his emotions, so he returned to his calm self.

Emil, on the other hand, was fidgeting rather nervously.

"I'm not sure I'm supposed to tell you, but... I think it should be fine, right? After all... this is all for the benefit of Master... Hmmm..."

"Just speak!"

"O-okay! All of it was just an act, Master! Honestly! I had to act like that so Adrien would believe I was on his side, just as I had to feign interest in him this whole time. It was all so that I could get close enough to him."

"To what end?" Rey asked with a deeper frown.

"This!"

~GLOP!~

Right before Rey's eyes, Emil transformed into a perfect version of Adrien. "The conditions for using [Perfect Mimicry] makes it so that I have to be in physical contact with the target for an extended period of time. I had to find a way to do that, so that meant temporarily bonding with him until the conditions were satisfied and I could use the Skill on him."

Rey was already shell-shocked from seeing Emil transformed into Adrien, but after hearing her explanation, he became even more amazed—no, impressed.

He already knew what [Perfect Mimicry] did, and it wasn't just restricted to replicating the outward appearance of the target.

"Y-you have access to all his Skills?" Rey muttered, his eyes widening as he stared at Emil.

"Yup!"

'N-no way! She's actually telling the truth!' Rey could see Emil's Status Window, and everything was perfectly the same as Adrien's Status Window.

Except, of course, [Skill Creation], but Rey already knew that wouldn't be carried over.

Still...

'Every single ability he has is at Emil's disposal, and if I copy all of them, then... I will also have the same abilities!'

This was a massive harvest for him—far more than he expected. "See, Master? I worked so hard to get these Skills for you, and you treated me so coldly..." Emil whined, returning to her Slime form in an instant.

"You were going to leave without me too! Do you even care about me, Master?"

"O-of course I care about you." Rey had to mutter as he stared at Emil with newfound affection. All the negative thoughts he had about her vanished into thin air the instant he saw the list of Skills he could have for himself.

"R-really?!"

"Yes, really! I was just so hurt that you left me. I thought you didn't love me anymore..."

"N-no way! I didn't mean to hurt you, Master! I'm sorry, Master!" Emil bounced forward, crying out of her created eyes, and Rey opened his arms wide open.

He also had his own thoughts as he drew closer to her, beads of tears forming in his eyes.

'Emil... you are a genius!'

The two of them hugged, happy to be reunited once again.

Chapter 745 Conflict On Trust

"Uwaaahhh! It feels so good to finally feel your touch again, Master!"

The warmness of Emil's voice, and the jiggly feeling her slimy body had as it rubbed against him made Rey laugh. He couldn't deny that it felt good to have her optimistic voice echo in his ears—the same voice he considered annoying in the past.

Somehow, losing the Symbiote Slime made him realize just how much he cherished her.

"It feels good here, too." He gave an honest reply to Emil's words, causing her to giggle loudly. He felt her body rub off against him even more, and he let her have her fun. He didn't even care that this was happening in front of an entire population of Elves. The current Rey would do anything to spoil Emil for her accomplishments.

'I definitely won't hold back on appreciating her this time.'

"Hehehehehe! Master loves Emil!" Well, there were things Rey thought he would have to clarify, but for the most part... he felt things were still within control. As long as his Slime didn't have any strange ideas, he didn't really mind whatever she said.

"Master and Emil are going to have a—"

"Okayyyy, slow down!" Rey swiftly raised his voice, feeling within his gut that this was the right time to cut Emil off from whatever she was about to say. 'I have some idea about what she was about to say, and... yeah... too far!'

He instinctively stole a glance at Esme, not really knowing why, and he found that her gaze was not on him. Something about that made his heart sink, but also relieved.

"What's wrong, Master?"

"I really need to teach you about filters!" He found himself whispering rather viciously at the Slime.

"That's not the only thing I want you to teach me, Master. Hehehehe..."

"S-stop! Just... stop!" Rey was slowly being reminded of the obnoxious side of his Familiar, causing all the nostalgia to evaporate rather quickly.

'Ah, yes... Emil has always been this kind of person.' His thoughts trailed, but he still strained a smile regardless of the slight frustration coiling within him.

She was childish, immature, very suggestive, and incredibly clingy—not to talk of her tactlessness and a bunch of other qualities that Rey could remember off the top of his head.

"How did you even manage to fool Adrien?" He mumbled to himself, nearly out of disbelief.

It was strange to think someone like Emil came up with that strategy.

"A-ah! Ater was actually the one who proposed the idea to me."

"Huh...?"

As soon as Rey heard this, his strained smile froze in place, and his playful mood vanished. His eyes remained wide open and he stared keenly into Emil's eyes.

"What did you just say?"

"W-well... he told me to keep it as a surprise for you, but... when you were asleep that one time, he told me of a plan that he thought would make you very happy."

Rey's fingers rubbed against his chin as the image of Ater appeared in his thoughts. He could definitely see him pulling off something like that.

"It worked, didn't it? You were very excited to see the surprise, right?"

Even though he clearly heard the question, Rey didn't reply immediately. Instead, his thoughts remained fixated on Ater.

'He really went behind my back to plan something this intricate. I can understand the end goal, but... now that I think of it, this entire thing with the Elves has all been a part of his plan.'

Meeting Adrien, meeting The Oracle, and a whole host of issues; it all stemmed from Ater guiding Rey to the Elves and working certain things behind the scenes. 'He also hid important information from me, and I still don't know the extent of his knowledge since I didn't restrict his activities. I'm also not with him very often, so I have no clue what he does a majority of the time.'

In the past, Rey wouldn't bother thinking too much about it, but—

'The Oracle's words... it has to be about Ater.' He narrowed his eyes, parting his lips as he resumed his bright smile towards Emil.

"Of course, Emil. I am excited!"

"Yayyyyyyy!!!"

If Ater could use Emil—his own Familiar—to perform a task that he wasn't even aware of, Rey was slowly beginning to worry about just how deep his influence was. The worry grew into slight hints of fear.

'None of these would be a problem if I was certain that Ater was on my side... and for the longest time, I thought he was.' Rey thought to himself.

He always knew the Absolute Beast was evil by nature. Ater didn't even try to hide his malevolent side, so there was never an issue with it. As long as Rey could control him, and he was completely loyal, there would be no problem.

But... was that truly the case?

'Is he only professing loyalty due to some grander scheme? The Oracle told me to be wary of him, and so does the System. There has to be a good reason for that.'

Unfortunately for Rey, this wasn't the time or place to think such thoughts.

'Even if I think deeply about it, I don't know what I'm supposed to do to stop him. He's very useful, and I really could use him as an ally. He's also not shown any real animosity towards me, and he's always acted in my interests.'

The secrets and half-truths ultimately benefited Rey, so could he really complain?

'Should I trust The Oracle's words over Ater? Or should I trust Ater? What if his goals are simply parallel to mine—at least for now—so he is only on my side because it benefits him? The moment that ceases to be the case, then...'

Rey could feel paranoia beginning to creep in, and he didn't like the feeling.

'In the end, I think there's only one way to solve this problem, and that is to use my new Skill...' He heaved a sigh.

The one he got from The Oracle, and the best tool he had on his side at the moment.

'... [Clairvoyance].'

Chapter 746 Departure From The Elves

[Bonding Successful!]

Rey saw this System Window displayed before him as Emil's gooey body slipped back into him and re-established their Bond. Once again, he felt the unreal sensation that he experienced when they first bonded. A rush of power swelled throughout his body, and he felt beyond alive.

'Ahh...' It was nearly orgasmic, but Rey controlled himself from leaking out any of his feelings through his face. Hence, despite having a stoic expression on his face, he felt immeasurable pleasure internally.

Before he could even acclimate, though—

~I've missed your body so much, Master! It looks like your body has missed me too! You've grown stronger too, haven't you? Ahhh... this feels amazing!~

—Emil's voice pounded within his head.

He didn't complain, though. Instead, he simply smiled and sighed.

"No thanks to you. You drained all of my Mana, so how exactly was I supposed to fight back against that explosion you sent to me? I had to spend my preserved Stat Points." He murmured, slowly remembering the feeling of anger he had previously.

Now that he thought of it, Emil actually needed some talking to... or would that go to Ater? He wasn't sure who to blame, but he needed to still educate the former about what was acceptable or not.

... Just for future purposes.

~Why didn't you use [Consume], though? Didn't you Copy it? Me leaving you didn't mean you couldn't use it...~

"...."

~I actually thought that was what you'd do, though it would have taken you time to absorb the energy, which would provide me and that guy a chance to escape.~

For a moment, Rey froze. It seemed, perhaps even more than Emil and Ater, he also needed some talking to.

"I was overwhelmed and confused at the time. That's why I didn't... think to... use it..."

~I understand, Master! Honestly, I'm glad my departure shook you that much. I guess you really do care about me.~

"I do, Emil." Rey said with a smile.

No only because she was a very useful Familiar to have, and also not because of her recent accomplishment with Adrien. It went a step further than that.

'We've spent so long together—hearing each other's thoughts. To me, Emil is like another part of me... a neighbor closest to me than anything else. She can also be pretty endearing and cute—not that I'm going to tell her any of that...'

~Master, I can hear your thoughts, you know?~

'Ah, shit!' Rey's thoughts echoed as his eyes popped wide open. ~HAHAHAHA! So you think I'm cute, Master! You also think I'm a part of you? Kikikiki... hehehehe... hahahahaha!!!~

'Don't push it, Emil!'

~Aye, aye, Master!~

Despite the conversation ending that way, Rey could sense that Emil was happy with him, and about herself. That made him glad for using a trick on her.

'Of course, I know you can hear my thoughts, Emil... but only the thoughts I want you to hear.' He smiled, thinking on a deeper level than what his Familiar had access to.

Thanks to his Layered Thoughts, Rey could not only multitask, but he could segment his thoughts into various regions and fool anyone reading his mind.

'I meant all those things about Emil, but I played it in a way that will make her think I didn't want her to know my true feelings...' After what he recently experienced, he realized he needed to appreciate Emil more.

This was the first step towards that goal.

'Indirectly praising Emil will make her understand how I feel about her, without her constantly seeking validation and praise from me.' Rey concluded.

Perhaps this was a scummy way to go about it, but he didn't think of it that way. It was the same way siblings didn't need to constantly repeat that they cared about their fellow siblings since said affection could be gleaned from their actions and indirect interactions.

'I might not have many opportunities to show how much I value her, and Emil can get very needy at times, so this is the perfect compromise.'

Once he concluded thoughts on that front, he decided to address the other issue—Adrien's Skills.

'With those Skills, I'll be able to get considerably more powerful, and Emil will also be a powerhouse on her own. She'll be useful in a lot more ways too...' He thought to himself, acknowledging how things just got a whole lot better for him.

'Still... this isn't enough.'

The words of The Oracle still weighed on him. Only he knew what was about to come—the destruction of everyone and everything in this world.

'Compared to the heights I need to achieve to prevent the destruction of everyone I care about... of the people of H'Trae... I need to be even stronger.'

This time, the power he sought wasn't only for himself, but for the people around him. Money, business, and his own individual might didn't matter if there were no more hardly any living beings left in the world. In a way, protecting everyone was beneficial to him.

But... he wasn't doing this only because of that. After interacting with the Elves for long enough, Rey was able to confirm his feelings and fully accept his newfound perspective.

'I can understand you a lot more now, Adonis.'

He wanted to help more people.

'I have started with the Elves, but now I want to go even further.' He reopened the portal that had closed up the moment he saw Emil.

~VWUSH!~

In H'Trae, there were also Dwarves, Giants, and Fairies—none of which he had ever interacted with, or even seen.

'That changes soon.'

"Farewell, everyone!" Rey waved at the Elves, who had now resumed their cheers once they saw he was leaving for real this time.

He stole a small glance at Esme, and found her smiling at him. She nodded slowly and whispered some words to him.

This was the first time she would interact with him for some days, and he felt his heart skip a beat once he saw her lips move.

His mind interpreted what she meant instantly.

"Thank you." He repeated her words, nodding back before moving closer to the portal.

He entered the swirling gate, but not before swiftly whispering a response.

"You're welcome."

Chapter 747 Spectacular Welcome

"Haaa..."

As the cool wind flapped against his face, and the surrounding scent entered his nostrils and filled his lungs, Rey found himself smiling as he looked down on the City that was underneath him.

"... It's good to be back!"

Here he was—back in the Capital—completely enamored by the City he had lived in for most of the time he lived in H'Trae. The modern landscape was far different from that of the Elves, and the mere ambiance reminded him the most of home.

Yes, even though the Capital of the United Human Alliance was medieval in more ways than one, it still had hints of advanced civilization that made Rey leak out a smile once again. He missed this place.

"Everything seems to be the same..." Rey mumbled, even looking at the area where Ater had supposedly had a bit of a skirmish.

'Looks like he fixed it before I came. I told him I'd do it, and yet... haa...' Ater was too much of a perfectionist when it came to serving Rey, which made it difficult for the latter not to rely on him, or even doubt his true intentions. Still, Rey had already decided on what to do with him—at least for the time being.

'I just have to be more measured in my instructions, making sure he doesn't do anything behind my back this time. I should also put him under constant surveillance...' Rey stopped his dreary thoughts, since it was ruining the refreshed mood he was in.

'Right now, I shouldn't be thinking about Ater, or anything of the sort.' There was only one thing that was supposed to occupy his mind, and as he stared at the Royal Estate, the name of that person kept flashing in his head.

'I've been putting it away for days, but it's time. It's time I saw Alicia.' He took a deep breath, preparing his heart. He made sure to regulate his heartbeat and also his expression to the point where nothing he felt would be removed by the System.

Sure, his emotions would be dulled in his current state, but at least they wouldn't vanish.

'I can't afford for them to...'

Once Rey was sure that he was ready, he instantly cast Spatial Magic that caused him to instantly vanish from his position—

~VWUSH!~

—And appear within her resting quarters, all within the blink of an eye.

'A-ahh...'

The moment he entered the room, he laid his crimson eye on the wide awake Alicia.

She was currently seated upright on her bed, her eyes staring longingly at the world beyond the window beside her. The winds caused her long brown hair to dance in the air, and the sparks that flew thanks to his teleportation added a glowing ambiance to the room.

Even as she sat, just staring out into the world, Alicia looked magnificent.

Rey felt an instant lump in his throat as he kept his gaze on her, unable to look away. Even though his feelings were dulled, he could still feel the loud thumping of his heart. He could still feel his body growing hot.

Everything was in small measures, but Rey could feel his emotions intensify and swell even beyond his expectations.

"Ali—"

Before he could complete his gentle whisper, she slowly turned her head in his direction.

At that moment, time stopped.

Everything seemed to fade into obscurity, and the details that Rey constantly perceived turned blurry. The only object of focus was Alicia—Alicia White, and that wonderful, wonderful smile that only she could give.

Her amber eyes seemed to sparkle, and her face brightened the moment she laid eyes on Rey, causing him to feel an even bigger spike in his heart—almost close to the danger level that he was so wary about.

He would have tightly clutched his chest if he wasn't so paralyzed by her gaze.

'S-she looks... she is...' Throughout the course of his adventure in the Land of The Elves, Rey had seen so many pretty women. In fact, pretty much all of the Elves were more beautiful than Alicia. Then, there were cases like Feralia, Ciela, and The Oracle, who were too beautiful to properly put into words.

Even then... none of them compared to the kind of 'beauty' that Alicia had.

It could have been due to bias, but there was something about her as a person—the gentle way she looked at Rey, and the warmth of her presence—that made her beauty extraordinary and unfathomable.

That was what he thought as he smiled back at her.

'... Absolutely stunning!'

"Rey... you're back!" Her voice was just as he remembered it to be.

It was sweet and melodious—the epitome of peak femininity. Since she usually spent time in the library, Alicia adopted a quieter voice than most people he knew, and that made her unique in that regard.

"Yeah. I'm back." Those were the only words he could muster as he looked at her.

"Come closer, Rey. You're not just going to stand there, are you?" As she said this, Rey's thoughts began to get clouded by the negative emotions he had suppressed.

Fear, sorrow, pain, and guilt especially ran amok in his heart.

Still, he moved forward.

"I'm sorry... I can't—"

"I know you can't properly express your emotions, Rey. I completely understand, so just keep coming."

There was something about the way Alicia said his name that made him soft like jelly. The kind way she looked at him was almost divine.

'I don't deserve this!' He thought to himself.

Before he knew it, he stood right in front of her, mere inches from the place where she sat on the bed.

"Why don't you sit?"

"...." Rey could not respond to the question, but he didn't sit either. He just kept staring at Alicia.

"Ater was the one who informed me of your condition, and I've already spoken to our classmates too. They've brought me up to speed on the current issues. I... could also hear everything that happened around me while I was unconscious, Rey."

His eyes twitched as soon as she said all of these things.

"That means—!"

"I understand, Rey. Everything that happened... everything you did... I understand everything."

Chapter 748 Youthful Exuberance

Tears.

In abundance, they fell from Rey's eyes as he heard those words from Alicia.

His eyes were wide open, encapsulating both shock and relief, leaving a gateway open for the bitter tears to flow.

Rey's knees felt weak, and before he knew it, he fell to his knees.

"I'm sorry for not telling you all this time! All of my reasons sound like excuses to me at the moment, and I know... I know I was supposed to say something, especially after you went and told me so much about you."

Not only did he passively deceive her, but he actively even lied to her.

And the result?

"Everything that happened to you... the tragedy that day... it happened because of me! If I wasn't so obsessed with trying to lead a double life, then everything would have played out completely differently!"

Rey's emotions were reaching the point of System interference, so he had to stop.

He took a breather, settled his heart, and continued—this time with a much lower voice.

"If I had been there that day... I could have... yet I... Alicia, I'm so sorry!" It was strange for Rey, who had so much power and authority—especially where he was coming from—to grovel at the feet of someone far weaker.

Any Elf who saw this would probably faint in disbelief.

But... this was exactly how he saw Alicia. She was much better than him in every department except for strength.

"I just got lucky, but... she's been an amazing person from the start!" He admired her and loved her at the same time—feelings that he intended to convey at this moment.

"Alicia... I actually... for the longest time, I've—"

"Rey, you shouldn't blame yourself for what happened to me—to everyone." Alicia cut him off right as he was about to confess.

He didn't want his words overlapping hers, so he instantly stopped.

Her warm hands reached out to him, touching his cheeks softly from both ends as she smiled with such kindness.

"Please stand up, Rey. Come sit beside me."

Rey obeyed that very moment, his legs still trembling as he did so. His eyes remained fixated on her as he gave her a look of disbelief.

"Why are you still so kind to me? Even after everything I... everything you...." He couldn't conclude his words due to the influx of emotions, so he let his expression convey the rest.

Alicia got the message instantly and only smiled sweeter.

"Because... it's not your fault, Rey." Once she said this, though, her expression became a lot darker, and the smile she had turned into a mild scowl. It wasn't directed at him, though.

"It's this world that is the problem." She muttered, her eyes trailing off as something burned deep within them.

"This world...?"

"I know you love this world, Rey. You have a lot you want to do here, and I completely understood. I want you to be happy, but... I'm sick of it."

All the glamor and sweetness from Alicia was completely gone, and she expressed sheer exhaustion—if not disgust—towards H'Trae.

'Alicia...' Rey felt bad, but he decided to keep listening.

"All the pain, fright, and all the other negative emotions I have come to associate with this world have overwhelmed the both of us... don't you see that, Rey? I know this isn't the right place or time to say all of this, but... honestly, I'm just tired."

When Rey first entered the room, the sight of Alicia staring out the windows told him she was simply admiring the world outside, but he now knew that his initial thought was wrong.

Alicia wasn't looking out at H'Trae. She was daydreaming about the world she had lost by coming here.

"I've had more than enough time to think about it, and honestly, Rey... I want to go back."

Rey understood perfectly. She had mentioned this in passing many times, but this was the very first time Alicia was saying it with such a strong expression on her face. The resolve was nearly overpowering, even for someone like Rey.

"I... understand." Were the only words his lips mustered as soon as she told him this.

There was no way he could tell her his true feelings now.

'There's no point if she wants to leave. If I try to make her stay, it will just be like with Esme all over again.' Rey was done trying to make others conform to what he desired, all in order to make him happy.

That was incredibly selfish, no matter how he looked at it.

'I want you to be happy, Alicia. And that means I have no right to get in the way of your departure, if that's what you really want.' This time, the tears completely dried up, and he reached out for her cheeks, holding them in his palm the same way she held his.

"I'm actually working on something that could potentially get everyone home—well, for those who are interested in going back."

There were many problems with H'Trae, and that could be enough to drive some people back home, but Rey wasn't going to ditch this world.

He reckoned there had to be a few others like him who felt the same way.

"Really?" Alicia's eyes instantly brightened the moment she heard the news. "What is it? The stuff you're working on."

"Haha..." Despite laughing about it, Rey didn't feel good about the topic in the slightest. After all, it had to do with Alicia leaving, and also Adrien's plan—both of which weren't the most savory things to think about.

Still, he remained positive through it all.

"Well, that's a surprise, Alicia." "Boo! Are you keeping secrets from me, mister? You just apologized for one, and here you are committing the same crime again."

"Pffft! This one is different, madame. It's supposed to be a pleasant experience for you... like a birthday present, you know?"

"A-ah! That's right! My birthday!"

"Hahaha! We tend to lose track of all that stuff in this world, don't we?"

"Exactly! Another reason why I should go back to Earth!" Alicia said with such mock determination that the next course of action was inevitable.

"Hahahahahahahahaha!!!"

Both teenagers laughed as they hugged each other, each feeling the bittersweet emotions associated with their reunion.

There was a lot that could be said right then, but the two chose to laugh and be happy about everything. It had been too long, and they missed each other.

'I've really missed you, Alicia.' As Rey closed his eyes, thinking such sweet thoughts, he couldn't have expected the next question that would echo in the air.

"By the way... who is Esme?"

"E-eh...?"

Slowly detaching from their embrace, Rey found Alicia smiling rather dangerously at him.

"Yes, Rey... I heard everything." "W-well, I—!"

"Come on, Rey... just tell me. I want to know who this new friend of yours is."

Unable to help himself, he blushed rather hard and tried to get away from Alicia, but she dragged him back, still laughing as she pressed hard on the question.

While all of this was happening, a certain individual was watching from behind the entrance to Alicia's room—through the slit between the double-door, for that matter.

"Haa... I can't interrupt now, can I?" His voice echoed softly as he took in the sight of youthful exuberance.

His crimson eyes glowed and his red hair swayed as he gave a wide grin.

Without wasting any more time, he left the door and began walking down the hallway, adjusting his tie while wearing his usual evil smile.

"Besides... I have a rather important business to attend to."

Chapter 749 Black In White

Deep within the Forbidden Valley—the territory of the White Dragon Lord—there existed a mighty Castle. In all senses of the word, it resembled an elaborate mansion, with a luxurious compound.

White fog covered the entire space, marking the valley as the territory of the White Dragon Lord of the Empire. Any who dared venture in without an invitation would instantly be noticed by the Lord, and snuffed out before they could take another step.

Within the domain of a Lord, they reigned supreme.

However, this particular Lord did not seem to be supreme in any sense of the word. Deep within her mansion, in her incredibly vast sleeping quarters, she sat on her incredible bed—one that resembled the amalgamation of many King-sized mattresses.

Even if she was in her Dragon Form, the Lord would not be able to cover the entire space that her soft bed offered.

The walls surrounding her were painted white, with hues of blue decorating the surroundings. Her curtains were also pure, with embroidery that had light blue hue, and the same applied to pretty much every luxurious design in the room.

Even the chandeliers followed the same format, and they reflected gloriously on the pure white floors. Her carpet matched the sheets she used to cover her bed, and all of them blended perfectly to form a chamber worthy of a Lord.

Despite being surrounded by all of this wealth and power, however, the Lord remained hunched as she sat, covering her face with her two palms.

"H-hicc... hicc..." Loud sobs escaped her lips as she sat there, desolate and utterly in pain.

Her body trembled, and gasps escaped her gaping mouth at intervals. Even when tears had long dried up from her eyes, she still continued to drown in self pity and the writhing pain within her right eye.

'I really... lost so much... in a single day...' Her disjointed thoughts trailed as she immersed herself in the most sorry state imaginable—at least for a Dragon Lord.

'I lost my precious subordinates, friends... and... my eye... all because of my hubris.'

She was done blaming the incompetence of everyone around her. After mulling over what happened for so long, she could see how everything was her fault.

It all stemmed from her idea—the audacity she had in seeking out a loophole to defy the Emperor's orders.

'Never again... never again...'

She had now learnt her lesson, but at what cost? She had lost too much now.

Her face was forever scarred, and her perfect body was now incomplete. She was bound to be shunned by the rest of her colleagues during the upcoming meeting, and it was possible that rumors of her misdeeds even spread to the Academy.

Would her precious students turn against her? Would the staff there look at her the same way?

Frey'ja had no idea in the slightest.

Her reputation and absolute standing as an exemplary Dragon Lord had been ruined.

"Would it have been better to... di—" She suddenly stopped, not only because of the fear that accompanied her thought on death, but because she heard something.

... Something outside.

"Who's there?" She muttered, her sobbing stopping instantly as she straightened her posture and looked at the massive door in front of her.

Nothing responded.

The White Lord stared in confusion. Frey'ja was sure that she picked up a certain sound—like the kind of noise someone made when they were shuffling around.

Since she had exceptional senses, even the slightest movement would set her off.

'C-could it be him? Has he come back... to finish the job?' The image of the Great Old Dragon Lord appeared in her frightened mind as she found herself trembling.

As she thought this, certain whispers began to dance in her ears—almost like a smoldered conversation that she couldn't quite pick up.

The whispers grew louder, and then suddenly ceased.

'W-what's happening? Who's there?'

The Great Old Lord wouldn't resort to such a sneaky way, which meant the person in her premises was not him.

'If that's the case, then—!' Frey'ja gritted her teeth and clenched her fist, rising up from her bed at once.

Anyone other than The Great Old Lord and The Emperor who entered her premises were intruders. The mere fact that said intruder was shuffling around and whispering meant they did not deserve a shred of her courtesy.

'If they got past the fog without detection, then they must be pretty impressive...' Frey'ja thought to herself, but she still marched forward anyway.

Perhaps the fear and pain instilled to her by the Great Old Lord made her immune to the cautious thoughts that would have caused more hesitation.

In a flash, she reached the door and even opened it wide open.

Nothing.

There was nothing there.

'W-what? What's going on...?'

She proceeded outside, first poking her head out and then her whole body. Before she realized it, she was in the passageway, looking at one side, but finding nothing there. For some strange reason, it was dark—despite the lights usually being perpetually active. Only the light from her room bled into the passageway, bathing her in showers of white, while everything else was pitch black.

Darkness was inconsequential to Frey'ja, though. She could still see perfectly fine.

'Nothing here...?'

Then—

After hearing another sudden whisper to her left, she swiftly turned and looked at the other side of the passageway.

There, seated on the ground, was a black cat.

It had completely black fur, with glowing red eyes that were fixed completely on her.

'What?!' The creature's appearance startled her, forcing her to blink with the only eye she had remaining.

Once she reopened her eye, the cat was nowhere to be found.

'What in the world? Was I hallucinating?' Perhaps this was a side effect from having only one vision that she didn't know of.

It could also be trau—

"Frey'ja." Hearing a familiar voice call her name, Frey'ja found the whisper coming from right behind her—within her bedroom.

'A-ahh... ahh...?' Slowly turning her head, as well as the rest of her body, she turned to look at the figure who sat there majestically.

'W-who... is that?!'

The strange man sat on her bed, and kneeling on the ground beside him were her two subordinates that she thought were dead. Kat'erin and Shai'ya did not look at her, though. Their heads were lowered, and they were completely still. They seemed alive, but something was off about them—something that even Frey'ja could not decipher.

"Come in." The man on the bed said with a smile.

He had crimson hair, and he donned a completely black suit. Despite being in the premises of a Dragon Lord, he exhibited even more authority than her.

Frankly... he frightened Frey'ja, so she did as he said. The moment she re-entered her bedroom, taking a few more steps forward, she heard a loud creak—the sound of the doors closing. With a widened eye, she turned to look at the reason why, but what she saw caused it to bulge and turn bloodshot.

Her three dead comrades—Tat'urius, Vul'khan, and Pro'theus—stood right behind her, blocking the room's entrance and exit. They also had dispassionate expressions on their faces, and their heads were bowed low.

—All for one person.

'What's happening here?' She didn't need anyone to tell her before realizing that all of this was occurring because of the smiling man on the bed.

But why?

'Who is he? What does he want?' As she stared at him with cautious eyes, feeling fear now rising and surging within her body, she took another step forward.

Much to her horror, the man grinned even more and parted his lips to speak.

"My name is Ater, and you and I... we have a lot to discuss."

Chapter 750 Resolve To Win

"Sit."

Before the mighty presence that was before him, Adrien Chase had no choice but to obey.

He had been escorted by Dragons to this place—the grand office of a Lord—so the least he could do was obey the simple instructions given to him by the one he came to see.

The one who was thoughtful enough to grant him an audience.

"Huu..." As Adrien sat on the rather comfortable seat, doing his best to observe his surroundings without taking his attention away from the entity before him, he maintained his smile.

The office was splendidly designed—possessing streaks of purple, blue, and black. The carpet was exquisite, and the quality of furniture was unlike anything that could be found in any human or elven settlement.

In fact, it was almost reminiscent of Earth.

The room had an air conditioning Enchanted Item, as well as Enchanted Items for lighting, among other very useful utilities. By all means of comparison, it was not too dissimilar from a modern office.

"So... how are you enjoying the Empire so far?" The man before him asked, his voice deep and his tone smooth.

It almost felt like the clap of thunder, though.

"I just arrived on the Continent, Sir. I haven't had much time for sightseeing or anything of the sort." Adrien rightly responded, bowing his head politely in order to pay as much respect to the figure as possible.

He found that this method usually worked on those in high authority who perceived themselves as greater than those they granted an audience.

Just as expected, his actions eased a bit of the tension in the room.

"Is that so? I understand then..." Adrien was yet to take a proper look at the Lord before him, but he could see his outfit.

He wore a polished black and purple suit—one that spoke of incredible wealth and prestige. Of course, it was enchanted—as was practically every other accessory that the man donned. He had an earring in one ear, a chain, and a few rings, from what Adrien could decipher.

Adrien made sure to observe all of this very subtly.

"I will have to leave very soon, since I have a rather important meeting to attend to. So, raise your head and let's conclude this as quickly as possible."

"Understood."

Adrien lifted his eyes and witnessed the handsome and perfectly crafted face of the Dragon Lord before him—The Storm Dragon Of Trembling Skies.

"Now then... where to begin."

Vai'zel was a rather pragmatic one—a sharp contrast to the regular prideful Dragon that existed within the Empire. Even among the Lords, he possessed a particularly sharp wit, coupled with an attitude that calculated all actions and outcomes based on utility. How useful or advantageous a position was determined whether or not he would subscribe to it.

It was the same reason he decided to grant the human before him an audience despite the more important things he had on his plate.

'I just got news on the deaths of those three, and I have to soon leave for the meeting that is being held to explain their demise and discuss the other pending matters.' Vai'zel thought to himself as he made a short sigh.

He certainly had his own thoughts concerning the deaths of his colleagues, but it wasn't like he didn't see it coming. The other Lords also probably had a fair idea what happened as well.

At the moment, however, the Storm Dragon Lord chose not to dwell too much on the matter. Instead, he offered his full attention to the human before him.

'Adrien Chase... when my Generals first reported their unanimous decision to take in an exceptional human who sided with them against the Elves, I was slightly curious, but didn't give it much thought. But...'

Somehow, Adrien had managed to garner even more of his attention over time.

'In the final fight, even though it ended in failure, he even fought off the hero of the Elves. I saw the footages, and I have to say... he's pretty impressive.' And all of this was not even accounting for the fact that the boy had Necromancy as a Skill.

He was too interesting to pass up.

"So, what do you want, Adrien?" The Lord finally asked, his eyes burrowing deep into the azure irises of the boy.

"I... would like to be of service to the Empire... to you. If it is possible, I'd like to integrate myself with your society and become one of you."

"One of us? As a human?"

Adrien nodded his head, not showing any hesitation to make clear what he wanted.

'I like that!' Vai'zel grinned to himself.

This human showed a lot more backbone than most Dragons that he knew.

"And what exactly can you offer to the Empire that would make us consider you?"

Adrien smiled the moment he heard the question, a move that made Vai'zel even more intrigued by him and excited to hear his response.

"I did a lot of research before coming here. I know about the true origins of the Dragons... as Otherworlders not native to his world."

'Ohh?' The Lord's eyes widened considerably.

"But you are not the only ones. The humans have also resorted to using your kind to battle you... by Summoning Otherworlders. I am an Otherworlder, and there are even more like me in the United Human Alliance."

"For real?" Vai'zel nearly gasped, incredibly amused by the information he was receiving practically for free.

Now it made sense why the humans were suddenly turning the tides in their battle against the Dragon Armies placed in the Western Continent.

"To think they had that kind of secret... how fascinating!" However, what was more fascinating was the fact that this human was able to figure out the identity of Dragons as well as sell out the trump card that humanity possessed.

"You were summoned to protect the humans of H'Trae, yet you would betray them? Why?" Vai'zel asked, licking his lips as he did so.

"Because I believe the Dragons will ultimately win this war. And in that respect, it doesn't matter what side I was summoned to, or what I need to do to achieve the desired result... no matter what, I intend to win."

"Oh? Fascinating!"

"...."

For a few seconds, silence existed between both Otherworlders—Dragon and Human—as they were locked in a seemingly ended staring contest.

The first to blink was Vai'zel, all due to the loud laughter that burst out of his flapping lips.

"You're quite amusing, you know that?"

"I am glad that I was able to amuse you, Sir."

"Oh, please. It's fine, Adrien. I quite like you already, so there's no need to keep up the formalities."

"Does that mean I can call you by name?"

"Hey! Don't push it. We're not that close." Vai'zel said this with a bit of aversion, but there was no rage in his tone.

It was simply a reaction of pride—something present within all Dragons, especially among Lords.

"Understood!"

"In any case, I am willing to give you a chance to prove your worth and join the Empire. But first, Adrien, you will have to go through rigorous training and education to properly serve the Empire."

"I completely understand sir."

"You do? You sure? It won't be easy. All your fellow comrades will be Dragons, and you will have a long way to go to prove your worth to everyone around you." Vai'zel hammered down the point, but none of that seemed to deter the boy.

Adrien simply smiled and nodded, parting his lips in sheer resolve.

"Whatever it takes."