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Chapter 637 Warlord

Back in the temporary command center, Karl stared silently at the map on the table while his adjutant, Lochlan Xenakis, stood beside him.

As a veteran who had been working alongside him since joining the army, Lochlan was one of Karl's most trusted aides and often assisted in planning the Eastern Army's missions.

"Commander, Blood Squad's latest update is that they've infiltrated the edge of Norham district. They should be able to reach Wildefield tomorrow, where Mrs. Hamilton is being held captive," Lochlan reported as he marked out the Wildefield area on the map. "Once they've rescued Mrs. Hamilton, Blood Squad will sail south of the Lerner River and meet up with our informants near Redlington. After that, they'll return to Horbah by land. By our estimate, the journey will take at least five days."

Upon hearing his subordinate's analysis, Karl shook his head. "Five days is the duration of the journey, but once Wildefield is under attack, I have no doubt the Medved Army will take immediate action. When that happens, there will be roadblocks everywhere."

With that, Karl leaned back into his chair wearily.

It was the second time his wife and child had fallen into the enemy's hands, and on both occasions, he had told the enemies that he didn't care whether his family lived or died.

However, as a husband and father, how could he not care?

Karl knew that if he wanted to save his family, he'd have to waylay the Medved Army along River Onxy. As long as Aidan was focused on the situation at the river, they'd have a better chance of ensuring his wife's and child's safety.

After all, people would inevitably die once a battle began.

"Lochlan, we've had to deploy ten members from the Blood Squad to rescue two people. On top of that, we'd also need to keep creating conflicts with the Medved Army to buy our squad more time. I can only imagine how many lives will be lost when the battle breaks out."

"Commander, our Eastern Army will never give up on any of our comrades," Lochlan replied solemnly.

"But they aren't soldiers!" Karl retorted.

"We're talking about your wife and child. We can't ditch them."

"Why not?" Karl snapped, his eyes turning red. "Tell me, Lochlan, if the wife and kids of a junior officer or soldier get caught, will we send out an army to rescue them?"

Lochlan sighed and shook his head. "Commander, you can't make such an assumption. There's no way the Medved Army will kidnap a junior officer's family."

Karl merely cast a conflicted gaze on his subordinate.

After pouring Karl a cup of tea, Lochlan added, "Commander, it's only a matter of time before war breaks out between the Medved Army and us, and there are plenty of reasons that can trigger it. It could be the capture of an informant, a military drill gone wrong, or even a snowflake that accidentally fell into River Onxy. That's just how precarious the situation is."

"But I don't want my wife and child to be the reason for this war," Karl muttered as he tightened his grip on his chair. "If it does happen, the soldiers who die on the battlefield won't die fighting for the country. They'd have died because of me!"

"We're your soldiers, Commander. It has always been our duty to fight for you."

Upon hearing Lochlan's words, Karl froze. "Fight for me..."

As simple as those words were, he couldn't help but feel himself getting choked up.

Ah, yes. From the moment I turned my back on Asura's Office, the Eastern Army solely belongs to me. The fact that these soldiers are still with me is more than enough to prove they're loyal to me.

"D-Does that make me a warlord?" Karl stammered as he turned to Lochlan with a look of anguish.

He had been in the army for seven years, and for five years before he followed Jonathan, he had already combed the Doveston region to wipe out the local forces. He hated ruthless warlords and their oppressive rule with a vengeance.

To his horror, however, he had unknowingly turned into his worst nightmare.

"How can I possibly be a warlord?" Karl exclaimed, standing up and toppling his chair over.

As the loud, crisp sound rang out, the reverberation sent a shiver down his spine.

Oh, to think I used to be the Eastern Army's Prince of Diyouli. Alas, that title I was so proud of is long gone. Back in Asura's Office, I was duly appointed and authorized to carry out my job, but now that I've left, I'm back to being just Karl Hamilton. That also means my soldiers have become my private army. Even though my end goal is to bring down Chanaea's respectable families for the good of the people, all I've done is turn myself into a warlord.

Upon seeing how lost and devastated Karl was, Lochlan hurriedly lifted the chair and sat him back down.

"Commander, this position is yours! Whether you're the Prince of Diyouli or not, we'll always be your soldiers, and you'll always be our leader!"

The more Lochlan held Karl down, the more the latter struggled. Karl's cultivation level might have reached the God Realm stage, but he couldn't care less about using his spiritual energy in such an emotional situation.

As a result, Lochlan, who was only in the advanced phase of the Superior Realm, managed to hold him down.

Karl continued to struggle with all his might, but in the end, it became more of a way for him to vent his anger than to get up.

Ten minutes later, he finally slumped into his chair, exhausted.

Lochlan, on the other hand, quickly straightened his clothes and brought the cup of tea to Karl.

"Have some tea, Commander."

With his right hand still shaking slightly, Karl downed the tea and turned to his subordinate.

"Lochlan, set up our defense and get into Level 1 battle formation."

"Got it!"

Meanwhile, at the Grand Hotel, Jonathan had imbued his spiritual sense into the Heaven Sword as the Ancient Sacred Dragon Technique whirred within him.

To ensure he had the highest level of privacy, he even enveloped himself in a transparent hard shell formed entirely out of spiritual energy.

As it turned out, that was one of the uses of a Grandmaster Realm force field.

The force field could contain one's spiritual energy waves, thus making sure that one's aura couldn't be easily detected.

Of course, such a concealment tactic had its limits, too. If someone else's force field converged with it, there was no doubt the jig would be up.

Thankfully, Jonathan had Lady Luck on his side.

Zebedee, who was staying in the room next door, had also expanded his force field to mask Team Oracle's aura. However, the force field was only as big as the room and never once overlapped with Jonathan's.

Just like that, both parties spent the rest of the day in peace until Zebedee and his team left at night.

When a sudden knock on the door rang out, Jonathan's eyes flew open, a glint flashing across them.

He had been preparing himself for that moment.

That was also why many elites preferred to look at people with half-opened eyes. It wasn't that they were sleepy, but rather, they were conserving and focusing their energy.

As soon as he felt the spiritual energy in his body, Jonathan shook his head.

There was no doubt that his Ancient Sacred Dragon Technique was unique and powerful, which was why he had been able to progress so quickly.

However, it was only when he entered Summerbank Abyss that he realized the benefits of a cultivation haven.

Summerbank Abyss had a thick outer layer of fog acting as a spirit shield to block off all external spiritual sense and energy. At the same time, that shield also prevented any of its internal spiritual energy from leaking out, which was at least a hundred times stronger compared to the outside world's.

Most importantly, Summerbank Abyss was chock-full of spiritual fruit. If he could continue his cultivation there, Jonathan was sure he'd be able to reach God Realm in less than six months. By then, his goal of becoming a Divine cultivator would also be within reach.

That's it. One of these days, I'll have to make a trip back to Summerbank Abyss for my cultivation.

With that thought in mind, Jonathan waved his hand and let Geoffrey into the room. What he didn't know, however, was that at the same time, a disheveled man was running frantically for his life in Summerbank Abyss while biting down on a green fruit.

That man was none other than Ryan Leiter.

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Chapter 638 In Despair

At that moment, Ryan looked haggard. He was covered in blood.

Behind him were about ten young wolves with peak cultivation of Superior Realm.

Upon receiving the news about Jonathan, Ryan also arrived at the peak of Summerbank Mountain. When he bumped into a group of disciples of Phoebus Sect at

Triplex Manifesta, he did not hesitate to use his secret technique—Blood Devouring Technique. Immediately, the disciples with cultivation turned into dried husks after being devoured by Ryan.

After Ryan got wind of Jonathan and the others' location from the remaining disciples, he went down the mountain and headed toward Summerbank Abyss.
Unfortunately, Ryan and Jonathan coincidentally passed through the same wave of fog.

After bypassing the fog, Jonathan could still control the opening and closing of the Three Ultimate Formations. However, because of the fog, he could no longer feel what was happening inside, therefore trapping Ryan inside by accident.

Having entered the formation for half a day, Ryan felt as if he was in heaven. He was deeply impressed by the immense spiritual energy contained inside. However, when he encountered a black beetle, he finally understood how terrifying the abyss was.

For the next few days, Ryan felt as if he had become an icon of bad luck.

While trying to avoid the black beetles, he hid in the water and was almost killed by a bloodsucking worm the size of a child's arm.

When he finally escaped to the shore, however, he encountered a surprisingly quick viper.

After that, he was chased by a black bear, tiger, and even a wild boar with huge tusks.

As the formation was created in ancient times, the demon beasts that persevered had a cultivation of Superior Realm and above. Weak and poisonous bugs like the beetle would stick together as they were large in numbers.

Ryan's cultivation was at most in the advanced phase of Superior Realm. Although he was nothing in the eyes of experts like Jonathan and respectable families, he was invincible to normal humans.

However, on this land, Ryan was at the bottom of the food chain.

Just when it was getting dark, Ryan finally shook off the wild boar. Before he could figure out why the boar had given up on pursuing him, several demon wolves surrounded him.

As the demon wolves had almost the same cultivation level as him, he was dejected.

No one could make it out alive after being surrounded by more than ten strong cultivators of the same cultivation level.

Besides, Ryan was not a super lucky person. When he leaped through the forest, he started to feel the spiritual energy in his body.

If he could not find a way to get away from the demon wolves, he would be dead meat.

Although he had used the fog to conceal himself back then, he was currently too far away from it. He would not make it even if he ran there.

After bypassing a hill, Ryan rushed toward the bottom.

The demon wolves behind him stopped and stood on the hill.

Upon hearing the sound behind him fading away, Ryan turned around, only to see that the demon wolves had given up going after him.

Did I escape?

Ryan's heart leaped with joy, but quickly, his expression darkened.

The reason the wild boar gave up going after me was that I entered the wolves' territory. Now that the wolves have stopped, does that mean...

At that thought, Ryan quickly kicked the tree trunk in front of him.

He could feel a slight pain in both his legs when the wood split. However, this action dispelled the energy for him to run forward, allowing him to flip backward and land on the trunk of a large tree. Then he looked at the valley while gasping for air.

Ryan had never noticed it before, but he finally saw what was different about the valley.

Above the horizon, there were waves of fog that extended down into the valley, and among the trees, something seemed to be glowing faintly.

When the spiritual energy whirled into his eyes, Ryan looked down. In the faint light, there was someone lying there.

How could there be someone in such a scary place?

Since Ryan became a cultivator, he no longer believed in ghosts.

However, everything seemed off to Ryan. It was odd for someone to appear in such a place, let alone cause the wolves to feel scared.

When Ryan turned around and saw the pack of wolves standing in the same place, he gritted his teeth and headed down to where the person was.

There's no way I can escape here by myself. Since there's someone down there, that person should be able to think like a human. That person should know how to communicate with me, right? Even if I die, I want to know at least what's happening here!

Ryan took around ten minutes to reach the figure, who was three hundred meters away. Fallen leaves were scattered everywhere in the valley. In the middle was an ancient tree

that had been chopped off. It was a meter taller than the pile of fallen leaves on the ground. In fact, the tree mirrored a bed made by nature itself.

As for the figure surrounded by rays of light, it turned out to be a woman with a gorgeous figure. However, she was stark naked.

Perhaps the woman had heard something, for she opened her eyes with a moan.

Upon seeing Ryan, the woman sat up.

"Who are you?" The woman looked at Ryan curiously. "Are you here to play with me?"

If one were to encounter a naked woman lying in the valley asking if they were there to play with her, not to mention that it was nighttime, most would be struck with fear just by that thought.

Although Ryan was also afraid, he suppressed the urge to escape. He clenched his fists and forced himself to stay.

Since the woman could talk and communicate, Ryan needed to ask her about this weird place.

I'm going to die anyway. I might as well make my death a quick one.

Suppressing the fear and anxiety in his heart, Ryan asked the woman politely, "My name is Ryan Leiter. May I know what your name is?" "Me?" The woman blinked at Ryan. "I'm Joselle Goldstein."

Instantly, Ryan could feel the spiritual energy within him whirring at warp speed.

Jonathan Goldstein and Joselle Goldstein.

If anyone came up to him and clarified the duo had nothing to do with each other, he would never believe it.

However, since Jonathan was not there, no one would recognize him.

"Are you afraid?" Joselle asked Ryan while smiling cheekily.

Ryan nodded slightly. "I couldn't find my way out since I entered the abyss. I've been getting hunted down by all kinds of beasts these past few days."

"Are you talking about those?" Joselle pointed at the top of the valley.

Ryan turned around. However, he could no longer tell if the demon wolves were still there, as he was too far away.

"Those wolves are delicious. Jonathan cooked them once for me, and it was absolutely scrumptious."

Jonathan?

Upon hearing Joselle's words, Ryan stared at her alertly. "Who is this Jonathan? Based on your surnames, both of you seem like you're from the same tribe."

"That's not the case. He's my slave, and he's also the one who gave me my name," Joselle replied smilingly.

"You can't go out, and neither can I. Both of us are stuck in the same boat. You're injured quite badly too. If you don't get yourself treated in time, you probably won't be able to play with me."

While saying that, Joselle fell into deep thought. With a wave of her hand, she chopped off some hair and presented it to Ryan. "This hair has my aura. If you take them with you, no demon beasts will dare to get close to you in a short period. If you head thirty miles ahead, you'll see a Flaming Tree growing on top of human bones. Its leaves are like flames swaying in the wind, while its sap can revive the dead. Anyway, I need to sleep now. You should go and treat your injuries."

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Chapter 639 A Huge Problem

Upon saying that, Joselle once again lay down on the large tree stump and closed her eyes.

Meanwhile, Ryan was lost in thought as he stared at the lock of hair in his grasp. He was almost certain of it. There was something not quite right with Joselle. Putting aside her outward appearance and the time and place at which she appeared, the fact that she had said no demon beast would dare to approach him with the lock of hair made her seem more terrifying than a demon beast.

However, Ryan was left with no choice. Because of the continuous days of fleeing for his life, his body was riddled with severe injuries.

Even if those injuries were not life-threatening at the moment, they would eventually become a problem if left untreated.

After all, a cultivator was still a human. Spiritual energy did not make a person omnipotent. A deep wound on the body could become inflamed and eventually take his life.

Most importantly, while Joselle might have acted strangely, she did not exhibit any murderous intent toward Ryan from the moment of her appearance until now. This gave Ryan a measure of reassurance.

Their surroundings were pitch black. Although Ryan was a cultivator, his vision only

enabled him to see roughly ten meters ahead. Any further than that distance were unknown dangers.

If the lock of hair was not as strong as Joselle had claimed it was, Ryan would likely die halfway down the road.

Should I go?

Ryan turned to look at Joselle. He realized that her chest was heaving gently. She appeared to be asleep.

"Joselle, did you say that Jonathan is your slave?"

"Yes, he is. But he ran away." Still, Joselle did not open her eyes. She spoke as if she were in a dream.

"The power of that lock of hair can last up to ten days. After ten days, it will lose its effect when my aura fades away. When that time comes, there are only five safe locations within the abyss for someone with a weak Superior Realm cultivation level like yours. They are located within the Four Symbol Formation and the valley here. If you dare venture out to other places, you will die without so much as leaving a corpse."

Ryan felt conflicted when he recalled the bizarre creatures he had encountered. "Then why did you save me?"

Joselle opened her eyes as Ryan spoke

It was only a glance, but the fury in her gaze made Ryan back away several steps and collapse butt-first onto the ground.

Joselle laughed happily as she observed the sight before her.

"You won't know about this since it's your first time here. Once this place has been sealed shut, it will only reopen in three years. The reason I saved you was so that I would have someone to talk to and relieve my boredom. Otherwise, with a cultivation level like yours, you're no different from an ant in the abyss. I grow weary of your indecisiveness. If you don't intend to go, stop disturbing my rest."

Upon saying that, Joselle fell silent and closed her eyes once again.

Amidst the gust of wind from the mountain, Ryan gripped the long lock of hair in his hand and turned around to leave.

If Joselle had looked for a reason to deceive him, Ryan would rather die than listen to her advice to heal his injuries.

However, Joselle had directly told him her motive. With this, Ryan was able to relax.

He was aware that Joselle definitely had other intentions, but this also provided him with some clarity. Although Joselle was using him to achieve a certain purpose, at the very least, he did not have to worry about his safety in the meantime.

Joselle opened her eyes as Ryan's figure was engulfed by the dark night. Her eyes flickered, and her pitch-black pupils momentarily turned into narrow pupils akin to a cat-like creature's.

"I am not worthy of your trust, but you can rely on the sap from the Flaming Tree. The sap is the life essence of the Flaming Tree. Once it's been drained, the Four Symbol Trap Formation will be broken. I will finally be able to escape the place that has held me captive for thousands of years! I'm so curious about the world outside. There are airplanes that can fly, cars that can move, and even television. A world like that should belong to me!"

Joselle stared at the pale white light above the sky. The energy within her surged, and the spiritual energy fluctuated until it reached the Divine Realm stage.

Across heaven and earth, rune chains linked to Joselle emerged from under the tree stump.

An invincible shockwave dispersed in four directions, causing the fallen leaves surrounding her to scatter. A mysterious symbol appeared on the ground. Throughout the valley, runes began to flow everywhere.

Perhaps it was time to break the Four Symbol Trap Formation of two thousand years.

Meanwhile, at the Grand Hotel, Sparaville, Jonathan could not accept the fact that the university student-like person who stood in front of him was actually a shrewd intelligence officer.

However, as he thought of a young child like Donald, his concern was alleviated. Donald was Jason's disciple, and the former became deputy head of the special medical team in Asura's Office at the age of fourteen. Truly, each one was more monstrous than the last.

Geoffrey sat across from Jonathan and handed over the tablet in his hand to the latter.

"Mr. Goldstein, I've checked all the information on the foreigners in Sparaville. I've also instructed my subordinates to investigate them in detail, but we could not find anything amiss."

A tinge of gloominess flitted across Jonathan's eyes as he glanced at the messages displayed on the tablet. "Something's wrong."

Geoffrey hurriedly stood up. "Have you encountered a problem, Mr. Goldstein? I'll fix it immediately."

Much to Geoffrey's surprise, Jonathan only shook his head slightly in response to the question.

"There is no problem. However, that itself is a huge problem," Jonathan mumbled as he flipped through the information on the tablet. "There are always foreign intelligence officers within Chanaea. It's the result of globalization. It's a great power. Since Chanaea constantly cast its eyes on other countries, it's one of the reasons. Although it's not possible for the intelligence officers to make a trip between the countries daily, it's also unusual for them to stay put for a month. Moreover, the absence of intelligence officers from Jetroina entering Terrandya for the past month is extremely abnormal."

Jonathan continued muttering to himself, "This doesn't make any sense... Now that Karl has betrayed Asura's Office and taken control of Doveston, it's the best time for Remdik and Jetroina to attack. Remdik's Medved Army has a hold on the critical point fifty miles north of River Onxy. It makes no sense for Jetroina to stay put."

Geoffrey, who stood by the side, also frowned.

Jonathan's analysis was reasonable. However, the more reasonable it sounded, the more it represented his dereliction of duty.

Jetroina was bound to make a move. However, they had managed to impeccably evade Geoffrey's intelligence network. That meant Geoffrey had no reason to exist.

"Mr. Goldstein, perhaps Jetroina's intelligence officers and other personnel were aware of Karl's movements and made arrangements in advance. Perhaps they have already planted their people in Sparaville. I can move the schedule ahead by a month."