

Chapter 2956 Sworn Brothers

Sage's expression darkened briefly as he followed the sentry's lead, navigating the winding paths of Thorneville and ascending the mountain slopes.

Taking in the village's haphazard construction, Sage couldn't resist a sigh. "Seems like the wealth didn't go into the buildings."

The sentries shared a knowing chuckle at his observation. "Well, you guys took your share," one quipped, their mountain candor shining through.

Unlike their city counterparts, mountain folk were known for their directness. Thorneville, nestled halfway up the mountain, had prospered over the years from the cultivation of Night Vine, but its infrastructure remained lacking.

The lucrative Night Vine trade had attracted numerous factions vying for a piece of the profits, leading to a divided and contentious landscape.

In the grand scheme of things, those involved in every step of Night Vine's journey—planting, harvesting, transportation, even risking their lives—received the smallest share of the profits.

The lion's share went to the investors, leaving little for the laborers.

If Isambard's smuggled goods were factored into the village's revenue, it could rival years of earnings.

Thorneville teemed with investors like Isambard, who reaped the lion's share of Night Vine's profits.

Meanwhile, the village laborers received a pittance, a mere fraction of the business's wealth.

This stark imbalance explained why Thorneville remained a humble village; had they received their due, it might have flourished into a prosperous town.

The sentinel's words struck Sage like a blow, draining color from his face as he fell silent, his expression grave.

Inside, he vowed to confront the sentinel later for his careless words.

Guided by the sentinel, Sage ascended to the plateau atop the village. The construction quality here surpassed that of the lower regions, evident even to the untrained eye.

A marble pavilion adorned the open space, a testament to the wealth invested in this elevated spot.

There, Sage found Delmont, hands clasped behind his back, his gaze fixed on the mountainside, seemingly oblivious to Sage's arrival.

Sage approached Delmont with a chuckle, playfully scratching his head before greeting him with a casual, "Delmont, long time no see!"

Delmont returned the smile, though his feelings toward Sage weren't entirely warm. Nonetheless, he greeted him warmly and inquired, "Been a while. What brings you here this time?"

Sage's smile widened, but he didn't immediately delve into the purpose of his visit. Instead, they engaged in small talk for a bit before Sage broached the topic on his mind.

"Delmont, what's your take on Matthew?"

Sage paused, a moment of realization flickering across his features at the mention of Matthew.

Delmont continued, his words laced with insight. "I know you're connected with the Durhams' sixth protector. You've been supplying Thorneville with firearms at a considerable discount. But with Matthew in control now, all that Night Vine is going up in smoke, along with your employer's profits."

As the realization dawned on Delmont, he grasped Sage's true intentions. Initially, their friendly chat had put him at ease, but now he saw through Sage's facade. What seemed like a genuine visit from an old friend turned out to be a calculated move, and Delmont's demeanor shifted from warmth to subtle disdain.