

S vs Rebirth 181

Chapter 181 Ezenholm

The next day.

Noel returned to Shale with all his equipment. This time, he also brought the book with him so that Septa didn't find it. This was a perfect opportunity to buy some time from Septa, lessening the suspicion.

Noel looked at Shale and asked, "Sir Shale. Do you have any mission in a neighboring kingdom or something near that place?"

"Hmm? Neighboring Kingdom? Our Demon Banner Army doesn't stretch that far. We are only here to protect our kingdom, not the others."

"If that's the case, is there a mission near the border?"

"Whose border you're talking about?"

"Greenwood Kingdom's border."

"Greenwood?" Shale raised his eyebrows in surprise, never expecting Noel to leave the country.

"Yeah."

"Well, let me take a look first." Shale narrowed his eyes and started skimming the missions in the catalog. It was a surprise that there was actually one mission from that far away. "Is this what you want?"

Mission: Demons have been harassing the troops in the border.

Description: A group of demons have been spotted near the borders. Please dispatch a knight to investigate this matter.

Reward: 1000 Points.

Time Limit: -

"This is surprising. If we're talking about the border, the mission is supposed to be handled by our branch over there. It seems that you can go to our branch and report for the mission. Why does a mission like this exist... as if it's an invitation for you?" Shale squinted his eyes, not understanding the whole situation.

Noel also wanted to know the answer. He expected Shale to not have the mission, so he would just choose a mission as close as possible. But he never thought it would be this close.

"I don't understand either. But since there's such a rare opportunity for me, I'm going to take it." Noel nodded without hesitation.

"Still, leaving the kingdom, huh. In your case, I guess that's fine too. But don't forget to inform the higher up about your resignation." Shale sighed. After his family was executed, Noel would seriously consider another kingdom with his talent. Before he was recognized by the kingdom, it would be better to start his career there.

Noel never went this far because he wasn't strong enough, but this time, Noel should be able to complete the trip.

But Noel tilted his head in confusion. "What are you talking about? I'm not here to defect to another kingdom."

"Ah? Ehm... Alright?"

"Anyway, I'll be taking this mission. I have brought my luggage, so I'll be going immediately."

"I'll write a letter to the branch then. Wait a minute." Shale was confused, but it wasn't a matter he should get involved to, so he just focused on his job.

After receiving the letter, Noel immediately grabbed all his luggage and rode his horse. This was a long trip, so he truly needed a horse to shorten the time it took.

While passing the city gate, Noel looked at the blue sky while muttering, "One month trip to the neighboring kingdom and fifteen days to go to the Sword Saint Tomb. I only have fifteen days to finish my mission.

"Well, Ardagan Land is also on the way, but I guess there's already someone who occupy that land. For now, I shouldn't care much about it." Noel sighed as he steeled his resolve again. "Alright. Let's go shall we? To Ezenholm Family, my mother's family."

...

As Shale suspected earlier, the mission was none other than an invitation for Noel to go to the other kingdom.

The one who created that mission was none other than the former head of the Ezenholm Family from the Greenwood Kingdom.

He was sitting in his garden, enjoying the beautiful flowers. However, his eyes were fixated on the letter in his hand.

The letter contained the last message from Count Ardagan.

'Father-in-law! You must be happy right now since the bastard who stole your daughter is dead now! Hahaha! Then again, your daughter is with me, so you must be hating me. But don't kill yourself just to beat me, alright?'

The opening letter alone was making his blood pressure rise. He almost crushed the letter.

'I want to talk to you about many things, but I think it's impossible for me to do it now. I want to tell you this... Don't avenge me. I know that your power is strong, but please don't do it. This is my and Leysha's request.

"Besides, Noel will be exiled to the Demon Banner Army. This will be a painful memory in the chapter of his life, but I'm sure that Noel can overcome it. I know because I have seen Noel's potential.

"He is kinda lazy right now, but once he has to do something, he'll do that thing as quickly as possible. At the same time, he also has the protection of our ancestor.

"Anyway, can you do me another favor? I want you to set up a mission for Noel near the border so that he has a reason to go to your place. I'm sure that kid will visit you before becoming a full-fledged knight.

"Of course, I'm not asking you to take him in since he is Noel Ardagan, not Noel Ezenholm. Hahahahaha! I bet you almost crushed this letter. Hahahaha! But please read until the end, alright?

"Anyway, he'll come to you sooner or later. In his visit, I want you to teach him something. Well, you can judge his ability by yourself and teach him something you think is the best for him. I know that you hate me, but that's my sin, father-in-law. Don't hate Noel for this.

"Still, I and Leysha will always say this... We never and will never regret this choice. We're sorry for making you sad and always giving you trouble. If there's a chance, let's gather together and enjoy our time together... Please be well, Father. Goodbye."

The old man clicked his tongue. He wanted to crush the letter but stopped after seeing the last sentence. He let out a long sigh and muttered, "I never hated you, bastard. Leysha could only truly smile when she was with you. So, let me see this grandson of mine again to see what kind of change he has after experiencing all this."

Chapter 182 Unexpected Encounter

Noel's journey was progressing smoothly since he used a horse. Although he often had to stop on the way because the horse needed to take a break, he still managed to cover more distance than what he could do by foot.

It took him three weeks to even reach the border. He had met some bandits on the way who thought he was an easy target, but he completely annihilated them. He didn't even bother to spare them and send them to jail because he didn't have enough time.

Some demons also appeared here and there but like Septa said, he didn't find anyone suspicious. It seemed the Supreme Devil Organization had been completely focusing on Septa instead of him.

While he was going to the border, Anna was also heading to her next destination.

She stood on top of a hill, looking at a vast valley before her.

The valley had one river going down, splitting the valley into two. The lush green trees and tall grasses gave a cool and fresh atmosphere.

"This one is a quite good place to live, except for the fact that this place is known to be a home for a thousand demons." Anna smiled. But she suddenly turned around when she heard voices coming from below. "Mhm?"

"This hill is hard to climb. But the valley should be good, right?" A feminine voice resounded in the area as a group of people almost reached the top of the hill, noticing Anna who had arrived at the top.

Anna furrowed her eyebrows when she saw this group. They consisted of five people: two men and three girls.

Anna recognized almost all of them because three of them were actually the Apprentice Knight from the Demon Banner Army.

'That's... Kirika Loetzel. Why does that another kingdom's noble come here?' Anna asked inwardly, not understanding her motive. She looked like a completely normal commoner in the Demon Banner Army, who was living with her mother, but in my past life, she was a demoness who led demons to eliminate a thousand knights of the Demon Banner Army, becoming the reason for the fall of the Demon Banner Army.'

Kirika noticed Anna as well, alarmed. "Anna Stargaze."

"Mhm?" The others also heard her and knew this name since they were from the same generation.

"Anna Stargaze? The number one genius in the kingdom?" The people turned around and saw Anna's figure. With her standing on top of the hill and getting her hair gently blown away by the wind somehow made her more charming.

The guys were entranced by her appearance as she looked like a gentle but reliable woman. However, Kirika and her partner didn't forget what he did to Noel when she first came to the fort. It was true that her treatment to Noel had grown better, but it didn't change the fact that she was torturing him at first.

Behind that pretty face was actually an evil heart.

However, it was different for the other three who weren't from the Demon Banner Army. The one who led them seemed to be a female with long braided hair, but the guy beside her seemed to be equal to her. He had the same brown hair like her, but he had a calm and collected face.

'The Quartzal Family... It was said that Earl Quartzal has given birth to two talented kids. The first one is a timid looking daughter, Misha Quartzal. In my past life, Misha Quartzal becomes one of the top Spirit ian, who is said to be equal to the royal ian.

'And the other kid is Samuel Quartzal. He has become a captain of the royal knight. Despite his conduct, he's a guy who loves to torture his enemies while camouflaging it as interrogation. Earl Quartzal was one of the biggest people supporting the royal family in my past life but they died when stopping the rebellion army formed by Noel.'

,m 'So, the knight behind them should be Samuel's knight, Lorenzo. He's the famous knight who will be protecting the Quartzal to his last breath.

'But I'm more impressed because Kirika's partner is actually this guy...' Anna looked at Kirika's partner, who turned out to be the bald guy who didn't care about anything other than getting stronger. 'He used his fist to crush all his enemies. It was said that his fist could destroy a small hill with a single punch. The

mad champion, Lokhtar. To think I would meet all these famous people here. Since when did they climbed? I didn't notice them at all.'

Anna noticed that they came from a different direction, so that might be the reason why she didn't find them. In the end, she brushed that thought off while looking at them coldly as if she didn't care about them.

But as expected from a noble kid, Samuel and Misha Quartzal immediately greeted Anna. "Well, isn't this Miss Anna Stargaze? It's a pleasure to meet you in this place. We are from Earl Quartzal Family, my name is Samuel and this is my sister, Misha."

Anna looked at them and nodded gently. "It's a pleasure to meet the rumored pair from the Quartzal Family."

"We're nothing compared to the famous Anna Stargaze." Samuel smiled and walked to Anna. "Do I have the pleasure to know why Miss Anna is climbing this hill?"

"I'm simply admiring the famous valley that is so beautiful but so deadly at the same time." Anna shook her head calmly.

"Then, if you don't mind about it, I can be your guide." Samuel smiled.

Anna glanced at his group. It was true that all five of them were actually talented. They should be able to venture the valley for a while since most monsters here were only Low Level Demons and Mid Level Demons.

However, her destination was further ahead where the Advanced Level Demons were located. Although this was a dangerous trip, she had to go there in order to make sure she was still stronger than Noel.

She thought for a moment and said, "It's fine. We should go separately."

"Please don't reject us. Going into this valley is better with a group." Samuel strongly insisted with a smile.

Chapter 183 Kirika Loetzel

"Please don't reject us. Going into this valley is better with a group." Samuel strongly insisted with a smile.

"Excuse me?" Anna furrowed her eyebrows, showing her displeased. She had told them that she didn't plan to go with them. Everyone already knew that her character, which was different from what she had shown to Noel the whole time. This was just her past character that she had changed, but since the other party didn't back down, she had to show them.

Samuel flinched and tried to explain. "I don't mean to be rude to you. But the valley is extremely dangerous. We might not be stronger than you, but our group is by no means weak. We can give you some help."

Surprisingly, Kirika stepped up and said with hostility. "As expected from the famous Anna Stargaze. You're as cold as ever. I wonder how much torture Noel has received from you. I'm starting to pity him for getting paired up with you."

Even Anna didn't expect this hostility from Kirika. She had felt Kirika's cold gaze whenever they met in the barrack, but Kirika never did something as if she knew that she wasn't strong enough to challenge her. She seemed to want to defeat her to break the pair, saving Noel. But if she didn't get stronger first to the point where she could defeat her, she wouldn't be able to challenge her again since she only had one chance.

"What right do you have to get involved in my matter?" Anna asked coldly.

Kirika gritted her teeth and clenched her fists.

"Let's stop, shall we?" Misha came between them to stop the arguments. "We're simply thinking that it's safer if we stick together since meeting here must be fate."

"That's right." Samuel nodded in agreement.

"There's no need for it. You should be the one to worry about your safety, not me. I'm not here to carry others through this valley." Anna harrumphed, turning around.

"You..." Kirika gritted her teeth and stepped forward, glaring at her. "Anna Stargaze!"

"What's wrong?" Anna maintained her cold face. Their heads were only a few inches away as they were glaring at each other. She smirked evilly and said, "Ah, you must be the one that Noel saved back then, who I accidentally saved as well. What's wrong? Have you fallen to that guy and want to avenge him? Sorry, you're not strong enough. MISS Kirika."

"!!!" Kirika widened her eyes when Anna emphasized the word 'Miss' as if she knew about her noble identity. "You..."

Anna smiled coldly as if her plan seemed to have worked. She could now see the hesitation in Kirika's face. She added inwardly, 'Well, they should now see how horrible I am. Even if they try to report to the people on their back, they'll be spreading how bad I am. This way, my father won't realize that I've changed and won't send any people to kill Noel. This should be enough to fool him for a while.

'I can simply 'change' in the future because of some mysterious causes. But I have to be this hateful for now.'

Of course, Anna couldn't let out such a thought and no one knew about this thought.

"If I need to cut you down, then I'll cut you down." Kirika reached for her sword on her waist.

Anna smirked and also reached her sword. "If that's the case, I won't show you any mercy."

"Stop, stop, stop! We don't need to fight." Samuel immediately went between them to stop them.

Anna glanced at him coldly before turning away as if she didn't care. She had wasted a lot of time with them.

"Don't bother me. If you bother me..." Anna released her Spiritual Energy and her lightning. Her sheer pressure alone cracked the ground, making them feel dread. "... I won't spare any of you."

"!!!" They trembled because they could see the killing intent that seemed to have killed thousands of people instead of demons. They never expected that Anna to be able to release this kind of killing intent. At the same time, even if Marquis Stargaze was a doting parent, he wouldn't allow Anna to murder so many people.

That was why they wondered where this killing intent came from. At the same time, they realized that Anna was out of their reach.

Anna walked away after scaring them, heading straight to the valley by herself.

Kirika gritted her teeth, glaring at her back. She couldn't help but remember all the past memories.

When she was seven years old, she was left alone in a middle of a banquet. Everyone scrutinized her because she was chubby. So, she left to cry by herself in the garden, but she met a black-haired kid who was sitting in the garden this whole time. He was none other than Noel Ardagan.

"You are... the noble kid from the Muivell Kingdom."

"So?" Noel glanced at her before turning back to his book.

"Are you here alone because others don't accept you as well?" Kirika asked.

"Huh?" Noel raised his eyebrows since that obviously wasn't the case.

"Ah, I apologize... You must be disappointed to be talking to a fat girl like me, right?"

"I don't care. I'm simply too lazy to bother with you and the rest of the people."

"But you have to talk to them to make a connection."

"I said I'm too lazy. If I have to make a connection, then I simply have to make them go to me themselves. I'm too lazy to go to them. I already have a job which is to succeed the house and make it better, so why do I have to work more to make relationship when I can do just that by making my family better?"

,m "That's..." Kirika was stunned. This was the first time she met Noel and his words actually changed her. She realized that she just had to change and improved herself to the point no one could ignore her anymore.

After that day, she improved by leaps and bounds and those who were mocking her actually went to her with their flowery words. Although Noel had changed and she realized that Noel's plan was actually a flawed plan, it didn't change the fact that she was saved by those words.

But after the destruction of the Ardagan Family, she was forbidden to help him even though she wanted to thank him so much. In the end, she ran away and hid her identity to meet Noel.

She could see Noel changing by putting more effort like herself. And when he showed his brilliance by using traps, she knew that Noel had been doing his best.

She thought she could pair up with him. But that was when Anna Stargaze appeared. A strong force that could make everyone feel helpless. She wanted to help but the moment she made a move, she would lose the chance to do it in the future, so she had been trying hard to get stronger to defeat her.

She took a deep breath and thought, 'No, I still have a few months. There's still a chance.'

Anna didn't know yet there was someone who had been haunting her back this whole time. One would wonder what Anna would feel and do when she realized Noel and Kirika's relationship. But more importantly, Noel didn't realize that his life had been filled with misunderstanding even though he just wanted to live lazily.

Chapter 184 Arrival

"Still, what's wrong with that Kirika? She's so hostile to me. Kirika Loetzel, a noble kid from the Greenwood Kingdom. She came to this kingdom abruptly and decided to ruin the Demon Banner Army by becoming the pawn of the Supreme Devil Organization.

"Now that I think about it, isn't Noel's family... Count Ardagan is certainly from this kingdom, but his mother is supposed to be from the Greenwood Kingdom, the Ezenholm Family. Don't tell me... Kirika is his fiancée or something?"

"So, Noel actually has a fiancée? Wait a minute. In my past life, the one who subjugated Kirika was none other than Noel instead of other people, who were stronger than him."

"There must be a meaning behind this. It seems that Noel was aware of Kirika's identity in my past life? Was it because he paired up with her? Then, was that situation fabricated for Noel to deal with the Supreme Devil Organization?"

She fell silent, realizing something. It seemed that she had never thought this much. "I have been with Noel this whole time, so the chance for Kirika to reveal her identity is never present. Should I give my spot to her like how it's supposed to be?"

Anna lowered her head. She didn't know why but she felt uncomfortable picturing both of them together. She shook her head helplessly, "Anyway, there's no proof that my conjecture is correct. And I am currently Noel's partner. I have no plan in letting someone get it."

She didn't realize that she was overthinking things, resulting in another misunderstanding in her head.

Still, she managed to regain her calm soon due to the matter in hand.

"I should focus on my plan. The trip to that place isn't that hard, but absorbing that many Demon Crystals will take a week or so? The faster the better." Anna nodded in agreement and immediately marched forward, heading straight to the original location of the treasure.

On the way, she found three Mid Level Demons that wanted to stop her. However, Anna simply took out her sword and covered it with lightning.

She struck the first demon with her lightning sword and somehow cut the demon's claws and ultimately split his body into half. After that, she spun her body and kicked a demon on the stomach, discharging the electricity until it created a hole on its body.

However, she still had one more demon to take care as the latter took the gap between Anna's movement to launch an attack from her blind spot. Unfortunately, Anna was able to move her body to the way she liked it.

When the demon was about to hit her body, Anna leaped into the air and spun her body, using the momentum to cut the demon's claw. As soon as she landed, she killed the demon in one swing.

It didn't take too long for her to take care of Mid Level Demon. If it was Noel, he would have used a longer time, but with his current amount of Spiritual Energy, he would have dealt with the demon easily. So, she truly needed the treasure hidden in this place.

"It's going to be harder from now on." Anna smirked excitedly as if she was ready for a hundred battles.

Despite the beautiful scenery, this valley was extremely deadly after all.

While Anna made her way to the destination, Noel had reached the Demon Banner Army's branch located three days from the border.

He immediately reported to the army for his mission. Unlike the fort, the army was stationed in the south of the city since they didn't have the full control over this city.

Since he was going to visit his family, Noel didn't hide his appearance this time or it would be suspicious later on. He went to the office and saw a quite small hall compared to the one in the fort.

In this place, the hall only had two clerks who were working behind the desk, accepting the people's complaints or reports.

Without hesitation, Noel immediately walked to them and handed the mission to him. "Hello, I am an Apprentice Knight. I am here for a mission."

"Hi. Let me check a bit." The guy smiled, welcoming him. He read the mission. His face was distorted because this was the first time he saw a mission as ridiculous as this. But there was a commander's seal on it, so the mission was real. "Can I see your badge?"

Noel handed the badge without hesitation, proving his identity.

After confirming his badge was real, the guy nodded his head and said, "According to the letter, there's a town two days away from here called Slavina. It's a small town, but that's the rallying point of an ordinary army of the kingdom. You have to go there to meet the informant in the bar after notifying the army.

"As long as you prove your identity, there won't be anyone to stop you since our army is ranked only second to the royal army. Do you need anything to help you in this mission?"

Noel shook his head. "No. It's enough. I just want to inform you about this mission."

"I understand. After you investigate the area, please report it to the army. They'll send the copy to us."

"Understood. Thank you."

"You're welcome."

Noel then grabbed the mission and the token, planning to leave right away.

However, someone who had been sitting in the hall suddenly approached him.

"Wait a minute. Sir Knight!"

Noel furrowed his eyebrows and looked at this guy. He was a huge guy but all of them came from fat instead of muscle. His round face and slanted eyes gave him a friendly atmosphere, but the slightly oily face from sweat made one want to stay away from him.

However, Noel didn't care much about his sweat as he was more focused about the matter. "Yes? How can I help you?"

"I apologize, but I overheard your conversation. It's said that you're going to the border..."

"Yes."

"If you don't mind, can I tag along? I have to go to the merchant association in Slavina Town. There has been many demons lately, so I'm thinking about asking a knight from the Demon Banner Army instead of any other people to escort me. Do you think it's possible?"

Chapter 185 Suspicion

Noel furrowed his eyebrows because this was the first time he experienced this. At first, he felt suspicious, but this was the hall of the Demon Banner Army. This place was bound to have many people wanting to put on missions for the Demon Banner Army.

,m "That's... I'm afraid that's not something I can decide by myself." Noel shook his head while glancing at the man who handled his mission earlier.

"Ah, if you're asking for the legitimacy, I have just posted the mission. I thought someone would do the job tomorrow or the day after, but if I can go there faster, then I don't mind paying extra."

"Well, I have to ask first." Noel nodded and walked to the counter again to ask for the information of this client. "Excuse me."

When the clerk raised his head, the chubby guy immediately smiled. "Hello. I'm sure that you have received my mission. So, I'm wondering if I can give him the task?"

"Ah, right! You must be Mr. Alanton. Yes, your mission is to escort you to Slavani Town. Are you sure it's alright?"

"Yes. I am fine with him escorting me." He nodded. "Although some demons are there, I think an Apprentice Knight is enough to escort me, right?"

"That's true. Well, if you don't mind about it, then I have to ask the knight if he's willing or not."

Noel nodded without hesitation. At first, he was suspicious why the guy chose him since it would be dangerous to go with an inexperienced knight like him. But when the clerk confirmed that the situation wasn't as dangerous, he realized this guy had been aware of the situation and decided not to take the situation that seriously. So, there was no need to hesitate.

"Alright. Let me delegate the mission to him then."

"Is this count as an individual mission?" Noel asked.

"I'm not sure since this is the first time I've seen an Apprentice Knight venturing this far. But we can draft a proof of completion for you and you can bring it so that the headquarters check it. Whether they accept it or not..."

"I see. In that case, can you do that for me?"

"Sure. It won't take too long."

Noel turned to the guy and asked, "Do you mind waiting?"

"Sure. I'll have to pack up my luggage too, so I'll be waiting for you in the north gate. We'll be departing in two hours. How's that?"

"Sure." Noel agreed.

"That's right. I have agreed to pay you extra. I have to change the contract."

"No, there's no need for that. Just consider that you're lucky to meet someone who is ready to take on your mission. There's no need to spend extra." Noel shook his head, politely declining the extra money. This mission was originally for a full-fledged knight, so he thought it was better not to take it since he was still an Apprentice Knight. At the same time, he was just tagging along, so it wouldn't be that much of a problem.

After seeing the client off, Noel handled the necessary process for the proof. If this mission could be used as well, it meant he would only need to complete two more group missions and one individual mission. He might graduate early, but he wondered whether he should do it or just keep training and graduate with other apprentices.

In the end, he brushed that thought off and headed to the gate after getting the proof of completion. As long as he got the stamp from the employer, he could use this as a proof of completion.

Meanwhile, the chubby guy wasn't really bringing his luggage. He was meeting someone in a dark alley.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. He has come. It seems that the long wait has finally been paid off." The chubby guy nodded.

"I understand. We'll stick to the plan. You bring him to the Slavani Town and I'll be heading there faster, so that I can prepare for the rest of our plans."

"Understood. How is the road?"

"I'll try to kill as many demons as possible, but I'll leave some so that you can see his prowess."

"Alright. Then, I'll excuse myself since he should be waiting for me."

"Yes." The guy nodded as he disappeared in the darkness.

After that, Alanton walked away as he brought his caravan.

It didn't take too long for him to find Noel, who had been standing near the gate, waiting for him.

"Sir Knight. I'm ready." Alanton smiled.

"That's good." Noel nodded and started getting up on his horse. "I'll be bringing you to the Salvani Town."

"Yes."

The two immediately left the city side by side.

"Still, it's quite surprising to see an Apprentice Knight venturing this far. If I'm not wrong, you need three weeks or so to reach this place, right?"

"Yeah."

"Are you alright for spending too much time in the journey? I'm sure that you only have one year to graduate..."

"There's no need for Mr. Alanton to worry." Noel smiled.

"I see. Then, I'll be counting on you." Alanton nodded. He knew that Noel seemed to not want to talk about his personal life, especially to a stranger. He had tried to be like a good elder who was just worrying about the young people, but he could feel Noel maintaining his distance. Even if he continued asking him, Noel would only give a simple answer.

'He's good. It seems that he is able to maintain some suspicion to other people. Without developing some trust, it seems that no one can take advantage of him.' Alanton thought, observing Noel.

On the other hand, Noel remained calm and rode his horse according to their pace while maintaining his surveillance, making sure no demons approach them. His family was a merchant, so he knew that the goods might be precious and he shouldn't let any harm come to it as well.

He didn't know Alanton had met someone and seemed to be targeting him.

Chapter 186 Reaching Slavina Town

Roar!

Roar!

A series of roars echoed in a plain. As warned, the situation near the border had been chaotic lately. In this trip, Noel had been encountering many wild demons that appeared here and there.

Luckily, Noel could easily handle them since most of them were only Low Rank Demons. Even Mid Level Demon wasn't able to hold a candle to him.

Noel's strength surprised even Alanton, as this wasn't the ability that a normal Apprentice Knight would have at this point of time.

After defeating all the demons and gathering their Demon Crystals, Noel returned to Alanton and asked, "Are you alright?"

"Y-yeah." Alanton was startled. "Thanks to you, I'm fine right now. You're strong."

"It's nothing worth mentioning. I still have to become stronger and stronger." Noel shook his head calmly.

"Ahaha." Alanaton scratched the back of his head. If it was any other generations, Noel's strength would have been at the top. Yet, Noel actually thought he was still lower than someone. It was a surprise even for him.

Then again, he heard a rumor that Anna Stargaze also came to the Demon Banner Army, so he thought this was the reason for Noel's attitude.

"Anyway, I'll be relying on you to escort me to Slavina Town."

"Is the road situation always like this?" Noel asked.

"Not really. Usually, the road is filled with bandits instead of demons. But regular escorts should be able to handle the problem. Lately, there are many demons roaming around. I think those demons are wiping the bandits too, so no bandits should show up in our trip because of the demons."

"Hmm... That sounds like countering poison with poison." Noel glanced at him.

"Countering poison with poison, huh. That's a quite good comparison. The bandits are like a poison since they rob, kidnap or even kill people around. And the demons are only acting with their instinct, so they cause a lot of problems again.

"But the demons are hard to handle as well, so I guess we have to wait until the Demon Banner Army understands the situation around here. If I'm not wrong, you're the one investigating this problem, right?"

"Yes. Well, I have to meet about the informant first who seems to have some clue about this situation."

"I see. I hope that this situation can be solved as soon as possible."

"I'll do my best." Noel nodded.

"Still, young man, why do you choose to join the Demon Banner Army? I heard that you have to undergo a harsh training. Looking at your behavior and etiquette, I can see that you're from a wealthy family, possibly a noble." He asked with pure curiosity.

However, Noel simply waved his hand and politely refused to answer. "Sorry, but I don't think I'll answer that question."

"Ah, I apologize. I was just..." Alanton scratched the back of his head, feeling embarrassed. But he added inwardly, 'He's also wary about letting out information. It seems that his situation is that bad that he has gotten accustomed to this kind of situation?'

Whether it was fortunate or unfortunate, Noel decided to keep his distance from Alanton. Noel thought that though Alanton was asking questions as if he was curious and concerned about him, the questions themselves were precise and seemed to be able to see through his situation.

Hence, he chose to maintain some distance so that he wouldn't get into trouble.

It took them a whole day to reach Slavina Town. Noel had defeated more than thirty Low Level Demons and five Mid Level Demons. It was a lot compared to a journey he usually had.

Without hesitation, Alanton used his stamp as the mark of completion, allowing him to finish an Individual Mission. With this, as long as he could figure out the situation, he would complete another mission.

"There you go. Thank you for escorting me." Alanton smiled and handed him the proof.

"I was simply doing my job." Noel nodded and waved his hand. "Then, have a good day."

"You too." Alanton waved his hand, seeing Noel off. After observing him for a whole day, Alanton realized that Noel was a hardworking guy, so his next destination would be the army instead of getting some rest.

As he expected, Noel headed straight to the army barrack to inform them of his arrival.

'This is my first time to meet the original army. If I'm not wrong, the Demon Banner Army is operating differently, so I don't know how this army will process my matter.' Noel thought as he found the gate leading to the barrack. It might be due to the strength of the Demon Banner Army that they didn't need guards to stand in front of the gate, but this was the first time he saw guards keeping people away.

When he reached the gate, the guards immediately crossed their spears against each other as if blocking the entrance.

"Halt. This is the Army Barrack. An ordinary civilian can't enter!" One of the guards stated with a strict tone.

"I'm here to report my presence for a mission. I am from the Demon Banner Army. Here is my token."
Noel took out the token to prove his identity.

"!!!" The guards widened their eyes, recognizing this token. The right guard hurriedly corrected himself.
"We apologize for stopping you. However, I need to inform my superior first."

"Please do so." Noel nodded in agreement.

He then immediately entered the barrack and returned with a middle-aged man who seemed to supervise the entire barrack.

"Mhm?" The middle-aged man furrowed his eyebrows. He didn't expect that they sent someone this young for this dangerous mission.

"I am Magellan, the supervisor of this branch. I heard that you're from the Demon Banner Army. For what reason do you visit us?"

"I'm here to investigate the disturbances near the border." Noel took out the mission paper and handed it to him. "This is the proof."

When Magellan opened the mission, he confirmed the mission. But he suddenly dropped his jaw when he saw the person in charge of Noel.

'Shale, the Demon Exterminator Shale? Such a person won't easily send a guy to his death, so it means he has some confidence about this kid. Well, this is the matter of the Demon Banner Army, even if this kid dies, it's not my problem.' Magellan thought for a moment and handed the proof back to Noel. "I have confirmed the mission. We have got the information as well, but it's better to listen the whole information from the informant himself since there might be some misunderstandings since we don't usually deal with demons."

"I'll do my best."

Chapter 187 Young Master

A moment later, Noel stood in front of a bar and examined the building. He could handle some alcohol, but it had been quite a while since he last drank one. There was a kind of craving for one, but he didn't come here for that.

When he entered the bar, he immediately went straight to the bartender. Of course, he glanced to the sides, seeing people drinking and creating mess with their drunkenness.

Noel ended up ignoring them, placed two coins on the table and said, "Two blizzards."

"..." The bartender furrowed his eyebrows, never expecting the person who ordered it to be this young. But he recognized the coins from the army. It was a special coin and one of the purposes was none other than for the secret code.

"Certainly." The bartender nodded and said, "Unfortunately, we don't have the bottle here. If you want to enjoy it, please follow me."

Noel maintained his calm as he followed the bartender entering a door that led to a deeper part of the bar.

He then knocked on one of the doors and said, "An extra drink."

"Come in," The person inside immediately answered.

The bartender then opened the door for Noel.

But surprisingly, when Noel entered the room, he saw a familiar figure talking with two people.

The familiar figure was none other than Alanton. He furrowed his eyebrows because he didn't expect for Alanton to be here. However, he had some suspicion of Alanton, so he managed to maintain his calm.

p Meanwhile, the one who stood across Alanton was a female. She had long brown hair and deep, loving gaze. The white dress couldn't cover her well-endowed body. When their eyes made contact, she

winked her left eye and stood up. "Well, what do we have here... To think such a cute guy comes to this place..."

She walked to him as if she wanted to seduce him.

But Noel's focus remained on the guy at the opposite side of this room. He was an old man wearing a plain white shirt and leather pants. He looked like a warm and welcoming guy, but he dressed too neat to visit this place.

"It seems that you're from the army..." The old man smiled warmly, but his gaze was so fierce as if he was trying to see through Noel.

"He's not from the normal army. He's from the Demon Banner Army." Alanton chuckled.

"Oh my. Why don't you come and join this big sister?" The woman hugged Noel's hand and gently dragged him to the chair.

"There's no need. I'm just here for the information." Noel pushed the woman away while glaring at the man.

"No need to rush, little brother." The woman coquettishly persuaded him, but Noel maintained his silence and refused to budge.

The man looked at Noel for a moment and realized the reason why Noel stayed there was due to his position. If he sat down, there was a chance that he couldn't reach the door behind him and escaped.

It seemed that Noel had been preparing for the worst. Despite his identity being guaranteed by both the Demon Banner Army and the normal army, he didn't put his guard down.

Seeing this, the man stated, "If you want to hear the information, it's better to sit down."

"I don't think there's no need for me to sit down." Noel shook his head.

"I made the rule. If you want to hear the information, you have to sit down."

"I can complain to the army."

"They have received the information from me. So, they will just give you the information instead of the army. Who knows if they can give you the same information from word to word."

Noel squinted his eyes and glanced at Alanton. "I see. So, that's how it is. It seems that Mr. Alanton is already aware of my identity and brought me here. If that's the case, then I'll investigate it myself."

"You are not strong enough." The guy harrumphed. "After all, the anomaly is caused by multiple Advanced Level Demons. Do you think you can handle them?"

"Who knows?" Noel smirked as if he was confident in defeating an Advanced Level Demon. Although he didn't want to be complacent about his achievement in defeating an Advanced Level Demon by himself, it didn't change the fact that he did. And now, he had the armor that could increase his fighting prowess, so he had more confidence in defeating them one by one.

"..." The man paused for a moment. "Muivell Kingdom in the west and Greenwood Kingdom in the north. Both kingdoms have been warding the demons for a long time. After all, there's a huge dark territory that we can't explore this whole time due to the insane amount of demons.

"And this balance is going to be broken soon because some demons has utilized the gap between the kingdoms to make their way here. In other words, the border itself is the weakest part they can enter to spread more demons.

"And the one who leads the demons are none other than five Advanced Level Demons. Their general whereabouts have been known, but there's need to be an expert to handle them.

"So, if you want to solve this situation, you have to bring an excellent knight and a squad that can handle all these demons. In other words, if you're going, you should take us with you." The old man stated with a grim expression as if he was ordering him instead of requesting him.

Noel became even more suspicious. "If that's the case, why give the mission to the Apprentice Knight... No, I should ask you a question. Who are you? I don't think this is a coincidence, but you seem to be luring someone to this place."

The man closed his eyes for a moment and said, "To answer your question..."

Suddenly, all of them gave him a big surprise. All of them fell to the ground in one knee, placed their right hand on the floor, and lowered their heads.

They said the same thing. "Please take us with you, Young Master."

Chapter 188 Reasons

"Please take us with you, Young Master."

"Young Master?!" Noel gasped and looked at them kneeling. It wasn't normal to do this if they just asked him to bring them, so this could only mean one thing. He asked to confirm, "Who are you?"

"My name is Elsa, a Spirit ian under Earl Ezenholm."

"My name is Alanton, I work at financial sector of Ezenholm Family."

"My name is Ilzen, I'm the previous master of Ezenholm Family, Rancart, your grandfather's butler."

"..." Noel had expected this, but he was still quite shocked to see the people from his mother's family to be here. "So, what's the meaning of the mission?"

Alanton and Elsa trembled while Ilzen smiled, "It seems that you have realized it too, Young Master."

"It's kinda obvious. Instead of sending such a risky mission to the full-fledged knight in the branches, you're sending the mission to the headquarters so that the Apprentice Knight can take it. Other than an invitation, I can't see any other reason." Noel squinted his eyes as if he didn't like the invitation.

"It's the will of Sir Rancart. He wants to help you, but because you're in the Muivell Kingdom and he is in the Greenwood Kingdom, he can't do anything unless he's planning to create a war between the two kingdoms." Ilzen explained.

"Putting that matter aside, shouldn't you give me an explanation about your actions?" Noel glared at Ilzen before turning to Elsa and Alanton, reminding them about what they did previously.

Ilzen made a wry smile. "I apologize for them. They were just doing their jobs. Sir Raincart has told us to test you to see your capability. But since you are Sir Ardagan's son, you must be familiar with the concept of give and take a merchant usually uses.

"Hence, we're creating the mission for the repayment to test you. Alanton is testing your capability while Elsa is testing your willpower. As for myself, I'm trying to see your judgment ability." Ilzen explained the entire thing.

"..." Noel still couldn't believe them. He asked another question. "Then, why does the Ezenholm Family show such a support at this time? Why did you not do anything during the darkest hour?"

"I apologize, Young Master. But Sir Raincart has forbidden us from doing anything. It seems that your father, Count Ardagan, has instructed it that way."

"My father?" Noel furrowed his eyebrows, not understanding the reason for this action. If they wanted, his parents could simply leave the country and seek refuge in Ezenholm Family. They might lose their wealth, but with his father's skill, it shouldn't be that hard to get it back.

So, unless the Ezenholm Family rejected him because they didn't want to partake in this entire situation, his father should have no reason to go to Ezenholm Family.

Hence, the explanation was completely nonsense.

Ilzen understood the confusion in his mind and opened his mouth. "I believe, if you want to understand the whole situation, you should ask Sir Raincart himself."

Noel pinched the bridge of his nose. His mind was muddled and his heart had complicated feelings.

His original purpose here was to cross the border and go to the Ezenholm Family. So, he had no reason to reject this proposal.

But he didn't know whether he could trust them as well.

Ilzen seemed to be able to see through Noel's doubt and immediately took out the Ezenholm Family's emblem, presenting it to him. "This is the proof of our identity."

"..." Noel's eyebrows twitched. He could finally understand why Ilzen was the butler. The way he presented something he needed the most and how he answered all the questions while trying to lower his anger, it was clear enough he was very experienced in them.

Noel took a deep breath and said, "Answer two of my questions first and I'll consider it."

"I understand." Ilzen nodded.

"First, why do you use a mission to invite me? Can't you simply go to the Demon Banner Army?"

"That's not possible. First of all, the Demon Banner Army has their elite captains and their commander. If we're sneaking around, we'll be found out immediately. And the implication after that is severe. We can create a war between two kingdoms or simply make the royal family accuse our family.

"Hence, after Sir Raincart sent us here a few months ago, we've been trying to make a contact with you through this application. Alanton is in charge of the Demon Banner Army's branch that you'll most likely to visit before going to the border.

"Elsa is doing the same, but she has taken care of the last month's job, so it's Alanton's turn right now. As for me, I'm the one in charge of them, ensuring they don't make problem in this foreign land."

Noel closed his eyes, contemplating that answer. After he got enough answer in his head, Noel asked the other question. "Then, what's the task sent to you by my grandfather? How do you even get this information? You're not telling me that you're the one causing this situation, right?"

"Of course not. Our mission is simply to invite you to the Ezenholm Family. When we were crossing the border, it was quiet. But a month ago, this situation happened, so we investigated it.

"I mean, if we sent a mission without a time limit, it would just cause suspicion. Since a mission near the border was already suspicious enough, we didn't want to add more to it. Hence, this mission was the second mission we sent."

Noel took a deep breath, processing the information. "Alright. I understand the situation. It seems that I can only get the rest of the answer after meeting my grandfather. Also, you want me to take you in this mission? This is considered cheating."

"Sir Raincart can't truly help you much due to the promise he made to your father. However, it doesn't change the fact he wants to. Hence, the two missions are his way to help you, hoping this can ease your burden a bit. We'll be the one eliminating the Advanced Level Demons, so Young Master doesn't have to worry."

"Whatever. My goal here is to cross the border while doing the mission. But I still want to take on at least one Advanced Level Demon. If you reject it, then I'll assume that the entire conversation never happened," stated Noel with a serious expression.

"We understand."

Chapter 189 Spirit Levels

,m "By the way, what is your strength? For you to confidently say to leave the Advanced Level Demons to you three, I don't think you're weak." Noel furrowed his eyebrows.

"Are you aware of the Spirit Level, Young Master?" Elsa asked.

"Yes. It's said that Spirit Level is basically the amount of Spiritual Energy in your body." Noel nodded.

"There is another reason for the Spirit Level to exist. It's to generalize our power. For example, there are Spirit ian, Spirit Swordsman, and even Spirit Commander, right? If each of them has a unique term for them, it's going to complicate things.

"Hence, the Spirit Level is to generalize them. There are seven levels: Spirit Apprentice, Spirit Practitioner, Spirit Wielder, Spirit Master, Spirit Grandmaster, Spirit Transcendence, and Spirit King.

"Although they're based on your Spiritual Energy, they also have to understand the application of Spirit. For example, Spirit Apprentice only has a little amount of Spiritual Energy, so they can only strengthen their strength or something. I'm pretty sure this is what they're teaching in the Demon Banner Army. They're turning you into Spirit Apprentice to prepare for the next one.

"Spirit Practitioner is a stage where you have awakened the spirit and can use some Spirit Abilities. It's pretty similar to the difference between Low Level Demon and Mid Level Demon, right?

"That's the same for Spirit Wielder, who is equal to Advanced Level Demon. The rank continues and you're forced to understand more Spirit Applications the further you go."

Noel nodded in understanding. He was already aware about the levels, but it seemed the reason for the levels were more profound than he thought. "I see. In that case, what is your level?"

"Me?" Elsa was startled and immediately answered. "I have reached Spirit Master a few months ago."

"I am only a Spirit Wielder." Alanton raised his hand before turning to Ilzen. "He is only a step away from Spirit Grandmaster."

"Hmm?" Noel narrowed his eyes and nodded. "I see. It seems that fighting against an Advanced Level Demons will be easy for you."

"Well, we can't underestimate anyone." Elsa smiled wryly as if she had experienced a dark past because of underestimating someone. She explained, "When you have seen people utilizing their spirits, you'll be

more sensitive to Spiritual Energy. You can easily discover their power when they're utilizing their energy."

"I see. So, what is my level?" Noel asked.

"Ehm... you have to use the Spiritual Energy first. Well, you can also measure it with the amount of Crystals you have taken, but we need to converse it with the rate. The rate is your privacy, so we can't do that."

"No one wants to know your talent after all... Unless they're trying to show it off." Noel nodded in understanding and released his Spiritual Energy through Spirit Aura Breathing, covering his body with Spiritual Energy. "Can you measure it with only this?"

Elsa gasped when she saw the amount of Spiritual Energy. She never expected Noel to have this much Spiritual Energy. "Young Master... You're only one step away from reaching Spirit Wielding Level."

"Mhm." Noel nodded while closing his eyes. He thought, 'Seriously?'

He remembered his status, especially the amount of crystals he had taken in the past few months.

Low Quality Crystal - 902/5000

Mid Quality Crystal - 129/3000

Advanced Quality Crystal - 1/1500

It wasn't much in his eyes, considering he hadn't even filled twenty percent of his quota for Low Quality Crystals. However, he almost forgot the fact that he had two spirits, so his limit was doubled.

'That's right. If it's the normal limit, I have already absorbed a big number of crystals. And I have to remind myself that my conversion rate is one hundred percent. Even Anna is hailed to be the greatest

genius with 95% conversion rate. As for others, the talented people usually have around 70% to 90% conversion rate. I guess I can understand the reason why I almost reach Spirit Wielder Level.'

Noel understood the reason in his mind, but it was still shocking to him since he never expected that his effort finally paid off. Of course, the big reason was the mission about the Saintess. He managed to scam all those crystals from Anna.

'Young Master should only have trained in the Demon Banner Army for a few months, right? This amount is crazy. Has Count Ardagan been feeding Young Master some crystals since young?' Elsa wondered. She was also worried that Noel was absorbing the Spiritual Energy without much thought that might result in his future, so she had to check it. "Young Master. I may have overstepped my bound with this question, but I have to check your condition. Have you been absorbing crystals since you're young?

"The reason I have to know this is due to the amount of Spiritual Energy. If you absorb too much crystals without being able to wield it, you can be controlled by the Spiritual Energy itself and might even kill yourself. We call this Spirit Overload. And there's another reason... You can also be called useless for just taking Spiritual Energy and not practicing how to use it.

"There are many noble children who use this method, but when they meet a real expert, they'll be cut down in an instant." Elsa was worried that Noel was irresponsible in this area.

"No. I didn't absorb anything. I only learned about Spirits a few months ago."

"Is that so?" Elsa let out a sigh of relief. The first problem seemed to have been solved. She then moved to the second problem. "Still, I'm a little worried... I don't know if you can control all that Spiritual Energy."

Elsa indirectly implied that Noel shouldn't be rash, especially when he wanted to fight one Advanced Level Demon. She was worried Noel was too confident in his Spiritual Energy, neglecting his actual prowess.

Noel understood the concern and simply said, "You don't have to. That's my part. You are here to observe my progress, right? Just do it and see whether I'm worthy or not."

"This..." Elsa made a wry smile and glanced at Ilzen to get his opinions.

Ilzen was worried as well, but still gave a nod, thinking he could save him if necessary. Elsa then agreed with Noel and said, "Then, please allow us to observe you, Young Master."

"Mhm." Noel nodded.

Chapter 190 Preparation

After reaching an agreement, Noel immediately turned the horse into the mailing service since he couldn't take the horse with him or it would die. It was that dangerous.

Alanton and Elsa also brought their own items while wondering if Noel didn't plan to get some rest.

p Meanwhile, Ilzen was standing next to Noel as if he was serving him.

"What are you doing here? Shouldn't you make some preparation too?" Noel asked. His eyebrows twitched, not understanding Ilzen's thought.

"I have prepared for everything, Young Master. There's no need to worry." Ilzen smiled.

"Mhm?" Noel narrowed his eyes. "We won't use horses and will camp there. So..."

"All have been packed in my bag, the tent and all related items for camping. Please don't need to worry." Ilzen calmly ensured Noel, showing his skill as a butler by preparing everything the master needed before asked.

"..." Even Noel was speechless and said, "Well, whatever. By the way, what's the real reason for the demons to go here? I don't think they're coming to us out of whim, no?"

"Certainly." Ilzen nodded. "Are you aware of the world's map?"

"Yeah." Noel nodded, recounting the world's map. "In the world map, there are two big chunks of territory that is split by the Dark Territory filled with demons.

"The first chunk is none other than the territory ruled by the humans. They formed four kingdoms to resist the Dark Territory, trying their best to expand the territory. Another chunk is said to be formed by other species, I'm not very sure since I haven't seen them."

"That's understandable. You have to cross the dangerous path if you want to meet them after all. So, people have no way to know about their condition. But seeing how the demons are getting pushed to our way, there's a possibility that the other party is fighting back so fierce that it causes a migration for the demons, pushing the demons near us to enter our border." Ilzen explained.

"I see. That's a possibility as well, considering the other party is located in this direction." Noel nodded in agreement.

"That's just a conjecture. We have no way to know it unless we send a group of elites that can cross the Dark Territory to investigate the reason." Ilzen sighed, knowing that the problem would be much bigger if this was the case.

"Well, my job doesn't change." Noel shook his head. "I'm here simply to visit my mother's family."

"I'm aware of it. However, you have to be careful because if what we're talking about is true, there's a chance that you'll be sent to the front line by the Demon Banner Army. It's going to be dangerous, very dangerous."

"Worrying too much will just make me paranoid. I'll just keep trying my best and see what will happen in the future." Noel shrugged. "Anyway, we'll be going after lunch. And it's not like we can go straight to Ezenholm Family after solving the problem. I need to go back to report it first."

"Yes, I understand. Don't worry, Young Master. This mission is going to be completed before you realize it." Ilzen ensured him that his strength was enough to handle this mission.

"Mhm." Noel wanted to talk about his family but realized Ilzen wouldn't be aware of the real reason for the execution. So, the only way to understand it was none other than to go to his grandfather.

Since this was the case, he continued his preparation by bringing all the necessary items and reporting to the army. After having a lunch, Noel regrouped with Alanton and Elsa.

Ilzen also had changed his clothes to a butler suit. It seemed he liked the suit that much as if it had become his second nature. When he lowered his vision, he saw a thin sword on his waist. It wasn't as thin as a rapier, but he wondered if the sword wouldn't break after fighting against a demon with tough skin.

Meanwhile, Alanton brought a big bag by himself. Half of them was filled with equipment while the other half contained money. Noel didn't understand why Alanton was bringing so much money.

Still, the most surprising one was Elsa. She was a Spirit ian. Due to the high number of people who became a Spirit ian, there was an official guild that took care of them. Obviously, they had a uniform that symbolized their affiliation.

Noel originally thought there would be a robe that covered the rest of her body and a heavy hat that would make her tired. But it turned out, she dressed as lightly as possible.

She only wore a plain white shirt and a miniskirt that made him think she just wanted her legs to be shredded by thorns or brushes in the forest. However, it seemed there was a reason for such an outfit.

As a Spirit ian, she would be vulnerable to an attack, so she chose light clothes so that she could maneuver around easily. As for the miniskirt, it was her preference. Noel understood her after remembering how she dared to try seducing him earlier.

"You're going to lead the group, Ilzen?" Noel asked.

"No, Young Master is the leader of this group. Please use us as you see fit." Ilzen declined without hesitation. It was an opportunity to observe his ability after all.

"I understand. But I don't know much about your power, so you don't mind using you quite a lot to see your capability, right?" Noel smirked.

Ilzen was surprised by this question. It seemed Noel understood the basic information needed to lead a party. Without asking them about their power, he wanted them to show their strength so that he knew what to expect from them, decreasing the possibility of making a judgment error. Ilzen smiled and confirmed. "Yes, please use us as you see fit."

"Got it. Let's go then." Noel nodded.

The group immediately headed straight to the border. The Greenwood Kingdom and the Muivell Kingdom were separated by one long river that gave birth to a forest. There were some hills too, making the terrain a bit complicated to cross.

Ilzen guided him to a certain area where he spotted the Advanced Level Demons.

But before they arrived, they were stopped by multiple demons that spotted them.

It was the time for Noel to see what these three were capable of.