

S vs Rebirth 221

Chapter 221 Soul Contract

"Beautifully said. You were exactly like my sister and she ended up becoming my old friend's wife."

"Eh? What?!" Both Noel and Anna dropped their jaws in shock.

The Sword Saint tilted his head in confusion. "You don't know? Don't tell me that cheap bastard has been hiding the whole truth?"

"Back then, my sister almost killed him a few times and annoyed him. Then, she soon changed her way and became his companion. A few years later, she planned to repay him for all the killing attempts by becoming his wife and taking care of his children for the rest of her life."

"Huh, what?" Noel was speechless. There were many things to comment, but not a single word came into his mind.

"You seriously don't know? I guess they were too embarrassed to tell it to the future generations. I was the one suggesting it by the way. I called it the punishment for the rest of your life." The Sword Saint smirked proudly as if he had done the best thing.

"Stop it! She had kill—"

"You are the one who should stop clinging to it. You should admit it that your parents are still alive and probably the entire execution is a fake. My power can see through one's soul and enhancing one's memory. That's why what you see is not completely fake because the father you saw not long ago was created by your memory, a part of your and his soul, and the opinions you have."

"What? They're still alive." Anna widened her eyes in shock.

"!!!" Noel gritted his teeth, not knowing why the Sword Saint said all those words. Now that Anna knew about his parents' conditions, she would surely come up with another evil plan.

But to his surprise, Anna suddenly dropped to the ground as if her legs had given up. She made a relieved expression as if she was happy with the outcome.

"That's... a relief." Anna smiled. This was the best news she could hear.

"You..." Noel pointed his finger at Anna because of her unrealistic reaction.

However, the Sword Saint playfully said, "I told you earlier that my power could see through one's soul, right? I saw her soul and she truly wanted to repent from her action. So, I judged that she should be given a chance."

"Do you think I will accept it?" Noel gritted his teeth.

"Even though you have been thinking about it? What's that all about? A murderer that has—"

"Stop!" Noel gritted his teeth, never expecting that the Sword Saint would remind him of his thought about a murderer that should be given a chance in the society so that he wouldn't become a murderer again.

The Sword Saint examined his expression before saying, "How about a request from your ancestor's? Well, your ancestor's wife is my sister, so I guess I can be called ancestral uncle. How about taking the words of this uncle?"

"I don't know whether you are truly my ancestral uncle or not." Noel snorted.

"Is that so? Then, how about I pay you to do it? Let's see, how about this..." The Sword Saint snapped his finger.

Suddenly, Ardagan's react and gave the notification about missions.

[Mission: Explore the Sword Saint Ruin]

[Description: A Soul of the Sword Saint Enzelgal has been buried under this ruin. Meet him and pass his test.]

[Reward: Ardagan Swordsmanship +3 Levels]

[Mission: Investigating the Ardagan Family's Mansion]

[Description: Investigate the Ardagan Family with Anna.]

[Reward: Rune Mastery +2 Levels]

"What... What did you do?" Noel gasped because he might be the first one that could intervene with the system directly. Even Anna could only do it with her information.

"I told you that I'm your ancestor's best friend. Do you think I don't know this secret?" The Sword Saint harrumphed.

"But do you think this is enough to move me?" Noel gritted his teeth.

"Right? How about I do this?"

[Mission: Investigating the Ardagan Family's Mansion]

[Description: Investigate the Ardagan Family with Anna.]

[Reward: Rune Mastery +2 Levels and two Special Missions.]

"!!!" Noel widened his eyes because a Special Mission was different from a normal or repeatable missions. Special Missions were called special missions because nothing could replicate it. Just like this Sword Saint Tomb Mission and the Ancient Demon Tree Extermination Mission, no one would be able to replicate it. Of course, the reward itself was extremely good.

"..." Noel bit his lips and raised his finger. "Plus tell me about Ardagan's secret."

"No. You should be the one to discover it." The Sword Saint rejected it without hesitation. He turned to Anna and said, "But I can make her not to pry your secret."

"Tell me about Dark Butterfly you mentioned earlier." Noel didn't want to take a loss, so he changed his condition.

"That can be done. I guess we have a deal." The Sword Saint smirked.

The Sword Saint gave an offer. "Young lass. Let's have a trade. You tell him about Fire Bird Nest and Body Strengthening Liquid and promise me that you won't pry his secret. In exchange, I'll give you the blade you want so much."

"Huh? How did you know?" Anna also had the same reaction as Noel. After all, this information came from the memory of her past life. In other words, the Sword Saint actually knew she was reincarnated.

In her previous life, she remembered the blade was auctioned by someone. The blade was so sharp and strong that it could become a national level treasure. This was a perfect blade she wanted. But the fact that the Sword Saint said he would give her the blade meant the blade was his.

And the one who auctioned it must be Noel.

After contemplating for a moment, Anna nodded her head. "I understand. I promise."

"This is the Soul Contract." The Sword Saint clapped his hand and formed a piece of paper, stating the conditions. "This contract will bind your soul making sure that you follow the conditions. If you don't, depending on your actions, your brain can explode."

The last condition was exactly Anna's will because if she took this contract, she wouldn't be able to seek Ardagan's secret. At the same time, it also showed Noel that she wasn't hostile.

"I'll take it."

"Press the contract with your thumb."

Anna followed his instruction and the paper soon turned into a blue ball and entered her head.

"The contract is now valid."

Chapter 222 True Spirit Body

"The contract is now valid." The Sword Saint smiled. "Try to wonder about Ardagan's secret."

"Mhm?" Anna was confused for a moment and tried to form a thought about Ardagan, but she suddenly felt an extreme pain jolting her brain. She instinctively clutched her head and fell to her knees. "Kh. What is this?"

"This is the effect of Soul Contract. I'm sure that you know the consequences if you're prying too deeply, right?"

"Yes." Anna nodded with a serious expression.

"Good." The Sword Saint nodded, satisfied. He then waved his hand as one of the chests on the side opened. Suddenly, a white blade flew toward them. The blade was thin, compared to Ardagan, but even with just a look, both Noel and Anna could feel the sharpness. They believed that the sharpness could rival that of Ardagan.

"This is the blade that my old friend, Simeon Ardagan, created. I was sulking at that time that I always lost against him, so he created this blade for me to defeat him."

"Huh?" Noel was baffled by his statement. "My ancestor can make weapons?"

"You don't know about it? But from your knowledge, it seems that he passed down the secret for Enchantment, which is perfect for blacksmith. This blade has five Enchantments: Extension, Harden, Conductor, Burst, and Blood. I don't think I need to explain it to you about the traits, so use it well."

"Yes." Anna gratefully accepted the reward.

"Alright then. Now that I have given you the reward, can you leave this place? I have things I want to tell him."

"I understand." Anna politely bowed to the Sword Saint and walked away without hesitation. She was curious, but she didn't plan to pry for that information. She was already benefited enough with this blade and the conversation with the Sword Saint that allowed her to solve some hatred with Noel. The fact that Noel's parents were still alive was huge for her.

As soon as they couldn't see Anna's anymore, the Sword Saint turned to Noel and said, "Alright. Let's talk about three things. The first will be the Dark Butterfly, the second one will be about your rewards, and the last one is what I want to tell you."

Noel nodded with a serious expression.

"Alright. Let's start with the Dark Butterfly. Are you aware of the classifications of Spirits?"

"Yes. There are five ranks of Spirits."

"Normal, Superior, Beastly, Demi-human, and Humanoid Spirits. These are the five ranks." The Sword Saint nodded in agreement. "Normal Spirit is a form of spirit that doesn't even have a fixed form like slime and other similar things. Hence, their intact of Spiritual Energy is low, causing your conversion rate low. This is what people usually have.

"Superior Spirit has gotten their form and they can take more Spiritual Energy, but there is a big difference with the Beastly Spirit. As the name implies, the Beastly Spirit means the Spirit has the form of a beast. You can consider them as an animal or a symbol like your snowflake.

"But different for Demi-human Spirit, at this rank, the spirit can form a humanoid body, even though it's not perfect. For example, if the previous form is a cat, when they reach a Demi-human Spirit, they can gain a humanoid body, but they are still covered in fur like that of a cat.

"When you reach Humanoid Spirit, the spirit has reached its peak form, mimicking the humans, allowing you to get a perfect match with your own spirit and causing your conversion rate to be one hundred percent. Well, that's what perfect match means."

"I see." Noel nodded in understanding. "But you said the spirit has reached its peak form... Does that mean the spirits can evolve?"

"Exactly! You can grow your spirits, so even if you get a Normal Spirit, you don't have to feel bad. It's true that your start is far lower than the others, but you can still make your spirit grow." The Sword Saint looked to the distance. "That lass has a Humanoid Spirit, so her starting point is higher. But you have Ardagan, so it means that you're better than her."

"Where does Ardagan come from?"

"Ask Ardagan. I won't say anything about him." The Sword Saint shook his head. "We're talking about the Dark Butterfly Spirit right now, so I think you know what rank she is."

"I have met her." Noel nodded with a serious expression.

"That's better, but I guess she doesn't tell you anything about her past contractor."

"Past contractor?"

"Yes. My sister had the Dark Butterfly Spirit."

"!!!" Noel widened his eyes in shock. "What did you say?"

The Sword Saint smiled. "I think you can guess it by now."

"If the Dark Butterfly Spirit is still alive, doesn't that mean the Spirits are not living within us?"

"Yes. Every humans in this world is the contractor of the spirits. I don't know how it starts, but it seems that there is a trade between the humans and the spirits in the past. The spirits will give their power to their contractors while the latter are giving the opportunity for the spirits to evolve."

"Huh? But knowing humans, they are surely going to betray that expectation, no?" Noel snorted.

"Haha, that's certainly true. I think that's why the conversion rate in the past is so high while right now, the conversion rate has dropped significantly. Even a 95% rate is enough to be the most talented person in the entire kingdom... Don't joke. In the past, every noble family has at least one person.

"However, there are also many humans who are trying to level up their spirits as much as they can. After all, a big reward awaits them."

"A big reward?"

"Yes. If you can reach the Humanoid Spirits, that is."

"A reward that only the Humanoid Spirits have... If they reach the highest rank, it means that their body is compatible with us..."

"Yes. And that reward is to borrow their whole strength. The ability unique to only the Humanoid Spirit that has evolved to the very peak, lending you flesh and soul to give you a power beyond one's imagination, True Spirit Body."

Chapter 223 Imaginary Battlefield

"True Spirit Body..." Noel sucked a cold breath. Hearing the explanation alone already told him how powerful the ability was. However, there was one thing that made him doubt about this ability. "Why are you telling me about this ability? Heisk is not even a Humanoid Spirit."

"First of all, you have to evolve Heisk to that rank before continuing until your spirit has a mutation. It means that Heisk will be able to use that ability, synchronizing it with you.

"Of course, the requirement of this ability is not just that. It's basically burning away your Spiritual Energy, so if you want to use it for a while, you have to reach at least Spirit Grandmaster."

"Spirit Grandmaster!" Noel widened his eyes in shock. "Are you kidding me? I am not even a Spirit Wielder."

"It's a long term project. Well, I know this information from the Dark Butterfly Spirit in my sister's body."

"Was that why Ardagan was reacting to her?"

"I think?"

"Well, whatever. This information alone is quite useful, considering I know how to get even stronger."

"Alright, then. I'm glad that you like it." The Sword Saint raised his finger. "Since we're done with the first matter, let's continue to your reward. I'm going to pay you in advance, so..."

The Sword Saint placed his finger on Noel's forehead as a surge of energy started gathering in Noel's brain.

Noel blinked once and his scenery changed. This time, he was transported to a plain white room without any furniture. The only thing he could find in this place was a wooden sword.

"Where am I?" Noel muttered in a low voice while looking around, finding any other details.

Suddenly, he heard a voice ringing in his head.

"This is a place I create in your consciousness with my power. It's impossible for me to teach you the Ardagan Swordsmanship since I use a different kind of Swordsmanship. Hence, I'm going to pull out the memory of your ancestor to teach you about the Ardagan Swordsmanship and the Runes."

Noel furrowed his eyebrows before finding a middle-aged man with short spiky black hair.

This time, the Sword Saint didn't make it react like a living human. Instead of talking to Noel, the middle-aged man started moving around to swing his sword.

Noel couldn't recognize him since he had no idea how his ancestor would look like. But considering this was from the Sword Saint's memory, it seemed that this was truly his ancestor.

Noel's ancestor, Simeon Ardagan, raised his sword with an emotionless face. This might be the first swing that Noel couldn't forget for the rest of his life.

The moment the blade moved downwards, it released a trace of Spiritual Energy in the air before creating a shock wave that traveled in all directions.

"Huh?" Noel took a step back while trying to hold his position from getting pushed back by the shock wave. "How can a single swing..."

"This is your ancestor. He is a formidable general. Once he moves, he always has something in mind. That's why when he swings that blade, he has an intention why he has to swing that blade.

"Have you ever thought about this... When you're practicing your swing, have you ever thought about the use of that swing?"

"No. It's just a practice swing, so I only need it to increase my stamina, muscle, and strength." Noel shook his head, answering the question.

"That's where you're wrong. Ardagan Swordsmanship is fueled by its fire. For your ancestor, it's the undying fire in his heart. That's why whenever you swing, you should have the fire to move it. In other words, your intention!

"When your ancestor swings that blade, even in practice, he had imagined his enemy standing in front of him. He killed his enemies multiple times as if this was the last strike that he would use to kill his enemies. That's why he's strong."

"A general's swing." Noel muttered in a low voice before closing his eyes. He never imagined someone standing in front of him whenever he practiced. This time, he tried to do something different.

Anna was standing in front of him as Noel raised his sword like his ancestor. It was then Anna leaped forward and waved her sword. Noel did the same to kill her, but surprisingly, his own imagination betrayed him.

He imagined the real Anna, so that imagination came to him with full force, causing the Anna in his imagination to accelerate and cut him down.

"!!!" Noel coughed a few times as if he had just died.

The Sword Saint's voice immediately rang in his head. "Seeing your reaction, it seems that you died... Hahahaha!"

Noel wasn't pissed by that comments. This was actually fresh for him.

"This is... weird but interesting." Noel looked at his sword while placing his chest where Anna cut him earlier.

"This is Simeon's training method. Imaginary Battlefield! By training like this, he's able to form a simulation of the battlefield, allowing him to become the greatest commander in history. But you seem to have a different path of him, so this Imaginary Battlefield will be useful to hone your battle sense. Of course, it'll be hard for you to imagine all of this and it will also take a toll in your mind, but once you get used to it, you can continue for a bit longer. For now, continue doing it for twenty times."

"Twenty times? That's not enough."

Noel furrowed his eyebrows. He always swung at least a few hundred times, so twenty times weren't enough for him.

But this was the Sword Saint's advice, so he ended up doing it without complaining further.

He imagined Anna coming to him and swung his sword. Surprisingly, his Spiritual Energy also reacted and started coating his sword to give more impact.

However, Anna did the same and caused their swords to clash.

Noel's swing was halted in the middle as if he was truly stopped by a blade. The Spiritual Energy around his sword was thrown away due to the sudden stop, causing it to travel to the ground and creating a small shock wave. It was incomparable to what his ancestor showed him, but this was certainly something new to him.

"This is..." Noel sucked a cold breath, not believing what he just did.

Chapter 224 Swordsmanship Training

"Don't be impressed yet. You can imagine her clearly and do it better because you're inside your consciousness thanks to my help. If you go out right now, I doubt you can do it. For now, I want you to use those twenty chances to get used to it and continue practicing it outside."

"But is this truly Ardagan Swordsmanship?"

"Yes, it is. Ardagan is a living spirit, so he's matching your own body since all humans are different. Depending on your situation, Ardagan Swordsmanship will adjust itself and create a form that matches completely your body and movement. In other words, you can pursue your own swordsmanship and that Imaginary Battlefield will be your first step."

"My own swordsmanship... Now that I think about it, when I tried to awaken my spirit, I had to ask myself a question... What is my goal? Is it truly a revenge? If my goal is a revenge, then I'll be empty or even kill myself after achieving it. So, my goal is not revenge." Noel looked at his sword. "Then, what is actually the goal of my swordsmanship..."

Noel fell silent in an instant as if he came to a realization. Even the Sword Saint who observed him this whole time was stunned.

'Is this guy for real?' The Sword Saint couldn't help but recall the memory when he was traveling with Simeon and his sister.

Simeon was swinging his sword as always and he couldn't help but ask, "Simeon. Isn't it time for you to stop swinging? It's so late already."

Simeon glanced to him and chuckled. "Haha, a bit more. I haven't reached my goal yet."

"Goal?"

"Yes. To accomplish a big goal, I have to create a small goal every day. Unlike you, who pursues a pure swordsmanship, my sword will swing for my own goal." Simeon smiled.

"Goal, huh..." The Sword Saint muttered in a low voice. Suddenly, Simeon swung the sword three times. The first swing was a downward swing with killing intent and Spiritual Energy, the second swing was formed after him taking a step back as if he was moving to someone and protecting him, the last swing was a diagonal one that was similar to the first swing, killing the second attacker. "Huh?"

However, Simeon suddenly dropped to the ground while pressing his chest.

"Kh." Simeon gritted his teeth.

"Oi! Are you alright?"

"Y-yeah." Simeon took a few deep breaths to calm him down. "I didn't expect that... To think the person I saved actually stab me on the back. If I have to swing my sword, I have to consider everything. That's why my sword exists... No, this is the identity of my sword."

The Sword Saint closed his eyes, never expecting that the sword Simeon talked about was his true Swordsmanship.

And the Sword Saint could actually feel it again right before his eyes.

When Noel swung his sword, there was a trace of anger and killing intent in that swing. It was so small that normal people wouldn't feel it, but he, who mastered the soul, could sense it easily.

'Huh? This is like Simeon's... No, it's different.' The Sword Saint thought for a moment before asking Noel. "Kid! What is your goal? No, tell me why did you bring that lass when she actually asked her father to execute your family?"

Noel was baffled by his question but still answered. "I simply don't want to owe her anything. She was the one prompting your tomb's existence, so it would be unfair to her if she couldn't go in because this was related to my family."

"Even though she killed your parents? Well, I mean, they're not dead, but before coming here, you believed they're dead."

Noel shook his head. "When I thought about revenge as my goal, I realized that it wasn't the goal because..."

Noel fell silent, making the Sword Saint curious. He couldn't help but continue Noel's words. "Because you will feel empty?"

"No. Because I feel like I'm free. I'm free from my hatred, I'm free from my revenge, I'm free to choose whatever I want from that point on." Noel smiled.

"!!!" The Sword Saint widened his eyes in shock. "So, the reason you brought her..."

"Yes. I don't want to owe her anything. If you owe someone, you'll feel restrained, right? As if you have to repay them. It's different if you make others owe you, you'll be free to do whatever you want because they owe you. That's why I don't want to owe anyone." Noel smiled.

His explanation couldn't help but put a smile on the Sword Saint's face. He was indeed different from the Ardagan he knew, but Noel seemed to have his own path. Although it was still something vague in his head, Noel would surely bring that path alive.

The Sword Saint said, "Interesting. If that's the case, I'm allowing you to swing thirty times for this first phase. I'll continue to the second phase after you're done."

"Second phase?"

"Yes. This Imaginary Battlefield is just one level for your Ardagan Swordsmanship. The other one is a bit different. I don't know if you're aware of it, but Ardagan Swordsmanship is split into three. The first one is just basic swordsmanship while the second part is filled with Spiritual Energy usage. I'm trying to give you another Spiritual Energy utilization for Ardagan Swordsmanship.

"It's called Spirit Weaponry. Do you know why there are no runes embedded in Ardagan while my sword has several of them? The answer is simple. Ardagan is already perfect.

"So, I will teach you this Spirit Weaponry that allows you to slash the Spiritual Energy itself. In other words, whether your enemy use lightning, fire, or water, you just have to swing your sword to cut them. Ardagan is the only one that can do this and it's also the reason why your ancestor never put a rune in that sword."

"Spirit Weaponry." Noel thought this was indeed something he needed. "Certainly, if there is lightning coming at me, I usually dodge it or block it with my own. If I have this, I might be able to do something more."

"For now, continue with that swing. After you're done, we'll move to the second phase."

"Understood."

Chapter 225 Rewards

Noel spent two hours inside that space to swing his blade according to the Sword Saint's instruction. He was shocked by how much a toll that his swing took in his mind.

It seemed that the Sword Saint had considered everything, including his limit. After the swing, he continued to the next training to cut through the Spiritual Energy. This was the uniqueness came from Ardagan itself, who was a living spirit instead of a normal sword.

Still, there was one more important thing he learned in this space. It was about the runes.

The Sword Saint gave him the remaining knowledge about runes that he had been lacking this whole time. With this knowledge, he could create many runes of his choices. He could even read the runes that sealed the Ancient Demon Tree.

The seal was made of at least thirty runes, so it was impossible for him to recreate it. Even if he could apply a quite powerful rune, he would exhaust all his Spiritual Energy for it. Hence, he had to stick with some low level runes for the time being until he absorbed more Spiritual Energy.

After those two hours, the space gradually disappeared and the Sword Saint seemed to be more transparent as if he had used most of his remaining Spiritual Energy.

"Are you..." Noel squinted his eyes, examining the Sword Saint's condition.

"I'm fine. No matter what, I had died so long ago. You don't have to worry about me." The Sword Saint smiled and patted Noel's head like his own son. "You are quite talented, boy."

"I'm flattered, but I don't think this is enough."

"To surpass her?"

"Yes. I have to do it." Noel nodded with a serious expression.

"However, working together with her will be more advantageous for you." The Sword Saint shook his head helplessly.

"Are you telling me to drop this hatred?" Noel gritted his teeth, glaring at the Sword Saint.

"No matter how I tell you that your parents are still alive and she doesn't do anything, I won't tell you to drop your hatred because that's your main driving force to get stronger right now. In fact, you can continue hating her for the rest of your life like your ancestor and my sister.

"Even though they were husband and wife, they hated each other and always tried to beat each other, whether in skill, parenting, or even on bed... Ahem, forget about the last one.

"Anyway, what I want to tell you is that she can make you stronger and you can cooperate with her. I know that you don't want to owe someone, so I'm just telling you to create a situation that way. She might be a key that can lead you back to your parents."

"A key to my parents? Why?" Noel was confused, trying to connect everything but to no avail.

"Just think about it like this. Your parents were the mastermind of their execution and they must be using body double to trick people. Then, they framed the talented girl who was supposed to have no power to decide their execution as the culprit. It's clear that Anna Stargaze is a huge part in their plan. Instead of killing her, you might want to use her."

"..." Noel fell silent for a moment. He didn't think about this. As the Sword Saint said, Anna wasn't supposed to be in the equation, yet, she became the center of attention. Why?

"That's all I want to say about her. Right now, I have to tell you the reason why I built this tomb here instead of your home. I mean, I am your Ancestral Uncle, you know. I should be allowed to be buried next to my sister, right?" The Sword Saint smirked. "Well, there is a reason why I built my tomb here."

"A reason..." Noel looked at him with a curious gaze while trying to guess it in his mind.

The Sword Saint nodded and walked to the remaining treasure chests. With a single wave of his hand, he opened all of them, showing Noel the treasures hidden in it.

The first chest contained a pair of golden rings. It didn't have anything special on it other than a single rune that was embedded in the inner part of the ring. "These were the wedding rings of your ancestors. I'm sure that you know the rune on it, right?"

"Yes. Transmitter Rune. By using the Spiritual Energy, it can transmit a weak signal to the other ring. Right now, I can think of several ways to utilize it." Noel nodded with a serious expression.

"These are yours." The Sword Saint smiled, placing the rings on top of his palm. "You can use it for your wedding rings as well since that might be what Samuel wanted."

"Uhm... Thank you." Noel didn't know what to say since marriage never came into his mind.

The Sword Saint then took out the treasure in the second chest. It's three blue pills. "These are the pills formed by my own soul. It can heal all your wounds as long as you're not dead. It can even grow one limb as long as the wound is still fresh. Even if you're stabbed in the heart, you will still be fine as long as you're not dead."

Noel dropped his jaw to the ground because these three pills were extremely precious. They were life saving pills.

"Are you sure about giving these three pills to me?" Noel sucked a cold breath.

"Of course. My tomb is for the Ardagan, so I want you to use this pill as you see fit. Knowing you, I believe you will use these pills carefully."

"Thank you very much."

"And this is the last reward." He took out a book for Noel. "This is my Spirit Technique called Hyper Jump. Basically, it allows you to kick the air to stabilize your balance. You can only do it once and it'll put some pressure on your foot, but I think this is a precious technique that can save your life."

"Yes. It's certainly a technique everyone need." Noel nodded in agreement. However, he also noticed that the last chest hadn't been opened yet, but the Sword Saint had said the last reward. In other words, the reward wasn't meant for him.

"You're not going to ask me about the last chest?" The Sword Saint smiled.

"No. If it wasn't meant for me, I don't have to be greedy for it."

The Sword Saint waved his hand, opening the last chest. "And that's why I want you to bring these with you..."

Chapter 226 See Off

The last treasure chest was actually hiding two books.

"These are my swordsmanship and footwork. I have written everything there. I want you to find a talented individual for me and give him/her these two books. I want someone to inherit my swordsmanship."

The two books gradually fell on top of Noel's hands as he was overwhelmed by these two books. This was the Sword Saint's swordsmanship they were talking about. No one would pass the opportunity.

However, he had to find a talented individual, so he had to choose carefully.

"But my eyes for people might not be good..." Noel shook his head helplessly. "I don't want to disappoint you."

p "It's fine. I believe you, so you have to believe in yourself." The Sword Saint smiled, assuring Noel. "Will you do it for me?"

"If you don't mind by how long it might take me, then... yes. I'll do my best."

"That's good enough. I have passed everything to you, so I'd like to ask you one last request."

"What is it?"

"Burn my coffin and corpse with Ardagan's Undying Flame. I don't wish my corpses to be studied by anyone else. Can you do that?"

"But shouldn't you be..." Noel was shaken by the request since it was a bit too much for him.

The Sword Saint patted Noel's shoulders. "I have died, so there's no need for me to continue lingering in this world. If my body is not burned down, my soul will continue to stay here, trapped until who knows when. So, please..."

Seeing the Sword Saint's expression made Noel's heart felt heavy. However, he could feel that the Sword Saint had no attachment left in this world. He gritted his teeth and clenched his fists. "I understand."

It was a heavy decision, but this was the last respect he could give.

"Thank you." The Sword Saint smiled and sat on top of his own coffin, waiting for Noel.

Noel lowered his head first and said out loud. "Thank you for everything, ancestral uncle."

"Your path will surely be an arduous one, but continue to march forward. You are different from your ancestor, so just pursue your own path. However, this is one last piece of advice from me... Never waver and see it through, no matter how painful your path is!"

Noel kept lowering his head as he released his Undying Fire, starting to burn the coffin as well as the corpse inside.

The Sword Saint's body became even transparent as it was truly the time for him to leave this world.

There wasn't any trace of sadness in his heart.

He looked up and closed his eyes for a moment, thinking in his head. 'I have lived my life to the fullest. I have lived by the sword and contributed to the building of an era. I met a best friend that I could rely on everything, I had a sister who made me feel home, and in my final days, I was even able to meet trustworthy sprouts of the next era, the boy who inherited Ardagan's system and the girl who was a reincarnated person, I can't walk in the future they will shape, but I'll watch over them from up there. With this, I have no regrets left.

'At last, I go to where my brother and sister await.' The Sword Saint opened his eyes as the image of his best friend and his sister flashing before his eyes, showing how much he missed them. He smiled. 'Sorry for making you two wait for so long.'

Noel gritted his teeth and declared out loud. "I see the ancestral uncle off!"

Noel shed some tears. Even though this meeting was brief, the Sword Saint truly gave a big impact to his life.

It took a few seconds for the fire to burn everything down. Noel knew that he had to move on. After giving another bow to where the coffin originally was, Noel finally straightened his back and took a deep breath to calm his heart.

After that, he walked to the items he put down earlier. He stored the books, the rings, and the pills in his bag before checking the room once again, making sure he didn't leave anything. Only then did he start going back.

It took Noel a while to reach the exit, so he used all that time to make sure there was no trace of him shedding some tears. He didn't want to appear weak in front of Anna, but then again, he was slightly embarrassed for crying because of the illusion. Anna even saw him like that.

'Still, I have promised that I'll investigate my family's mansion with Anna. As the ancestral uncle said, Anna isn't supposed to be in the equation, yet, she becomes the center of attention. This means someone puts her into that position for something.

'And that person might be my father. Does that mean he wants Anna to lead me to where he is? But even Anna doesn't know anything about the mastermind, so I highly doubt she's qualified. No wait, Anna still has her father, Marquis Stargaze.

'If Marquis Stargaze is actually an ally, Anna might be the key for me to meet the marquis. But I don't know whether Marquis Stargaze will play dumb or not, considering I have no information or any cheap to make him say everything truthfully. Maybe I can make Anna my hostage? Then again, I need enough power to do that. Even if Anna acted together with me, he wouldn't believe if my power was lower than her.

'Either way, it seems that Anna is an important piece in this entire scheme. And the clue is somewhere in my mansion. No, maybe there is indeed a hidden room in that place. At least, I know what to do to go forward. My next destination has been set.' Noel's expression became serious as he steeled his resolve to infiltrate his family mansion.

"..." Noel squinted his eyes because he didn't realize he had reached the exit as the blinding sunlight made his eyes feel burning. He glanced to the side and saw Anna waving her hand.

Chapter 227 Traveling

"So, where are we going now?" Anna asked. "Also, I have to tell you about Fire Bird Nest and the Body Strengthening Liquid."

"You can say it after we're done with this." Noel shook his head.

"Are you sure?" Anna was confused, feeling Noel had changed a bit.

"Yeah." Noel nodded with a serious expression. "I'll deliver the promise first and you're going to pay me after that."

Anna felt something weird with Noel. Although he was using the business term between them, he seemed to have changed a bit. This time for sure, Noel's hatred had diminished for a bit.

Still, there was no way for her to know whether Noel just faked it or not like the whole time they were together.

"Anyway, let's go."

"Where?"

"My family mansion."

"Your family mansion? Wait a minute. It's true that your family territory is in the middle of our return trip, but your family mansion is guarded by the royal family."

"Are you going or not?" Noel didn't want to argue with her, so he simply asked with a strict tone, demanding an answer between 'yes' and 'no'.

"Yes, definitely." Anna sighed. She had been thinking about Noel after leaving the cave, wondering what he was talking about with the Sword Saint. The Sword Saint seemed to be able to know about Noel's secrets with his power. So, she believed that the Sword Saint was also aware of her reincarnation. It was proven when he actually knew she wished to get his blade.

She thought for a moment and asked, "Noel. Do you mind if we go somewhere else first? I want to ask someone to attach the blade to the handle I have prepared. I'm sure that this sword will be useful for our mission."

There wasn't supposed to be any fight in this infiltration mission, so they might not need to even unsheathe their sword. But he couldn't really brush away the potential where they were found out.

"Alright. As long as it doesn't take more than three days."

"Of course, attaching it will only take a day at most. Though, we have to go to the Barun Plain first. Since we're talking about the Sword Saint's blade, I want a Master Blacksmith to handle it."

"Barun Plain... It deviates a bit, but we can indeed go there. Alright." Noel agreed to her request. "We still have a few missions left before our graduation, so we need to hasten our pace."

"Are you going to graduate early?"

"No. It's better to use that time to make more preparation. I have many things to do after all."

"So busy." Anna chuckled. "But I'll match your pace!"

"You can graduate earlier. No need to wait for me. There's no reason to do so."

"Aren't we going to be stationed at the same place if we graduate together?" Anna smirked. "Won't this be perfect for more adventures?"

He didn't want to admit it, but Anna was truly a good partner. She could cook, knew many things, and a great fighter.

On the other hand, Anna considered Noel as a guy who could improve rapidly, a commander, and someone that could keep up with her. He was the only one who wouldn't leave her alone in the future when she became strong.

Still, Noel's plan was to use the graduation to create his second identity. Having Anna there wasn't a good plan, considering Anna knew about his second identity.

"Whatever. I don't like being with you." Noel snorted.

"Eh..."

Anna chuckled as they continued to travel. They rode the horses to the former Ardagan Family's territory. No one had occupied this land for the time being because the royal family hadn't given any noble enough jurisdiction for this plot of land.

When Noel looked at this city from the outside, he had a nostalgic feeling because this was where most of his memory came from. If the execution never happened, he would still live in this town.

Anna lowered her head, feeling bad for what she suggested in the past. In fact, she wanted to be reincarnated before the execution. However, this was the situation, she had one more chance to make it right at the very least.

She gently brushed the sword on her waist. Her new sword had been completed. With the Sword Saint's blade and the Ancient Demon Tree core as the materials, she had produced a weapon only second to Noel's Ardagan.

Noel hurriedly wore a long robe and hid his face with a mask along. Of course, he covered his hair with hood. No one should know he had visited this place.

Even Anna had to do the same.

"So, how are we going to infiltrate this place? The gates are guarded, so I don't think we can go through them easily." Anna asked. "Does your family have a secret tunnel that leads to the outside?"

"None." Noel shrugged. Though, he simply didn't know whether there was a secret tunnel or not since he never learned the family business from his father. "This city is built in a safe place, so the wall isn't that high. We just have to climb it."

They had stopped in the previous city to leave their horses since it would be hard for them to enter with a horse. They even stood a bit far away to make sure no one spotted them.

"But there should be soldiers guarding the wall."

"We're going to infiltrate during the night and make use of our Moon Blessing. Search for any dark parts and go there."

"Then, we should hope that tonight is cloudy." Anna nodded in agreement.

"Not necessarily." Noel shook his head and pointed at the wall. "You can barely see them, but there are a few dots moving on the wall. How many are they?"

"The dots must be the soldiers' heads... Wait a minute, there are only two pairs of soldiers for that long wall?" Anna noticed Noel's secret meaning.

"Yes. If they only put those many during the day, we might only encounter a pair during the night. So, the infiltration won't be that hard. Though, we still have to be careful."

"Alright." Anna agreed with the plan.

Chapter 228 Sneaking In

"Go." A small whisper filled the silent night as a pair of people stood next to the wall, ready to climb it. As expected of a city built in a safe place, there wasn't even a ditch for basic fortification.

Both of them gathered their Spiritual Energy in their feet as they jumped as high as they could.

Even though the wall wasn't that tall, it was impossible for them to reach the wall in a single leap. Hence, one of them raised both hands while the other ones placed their feet on them, using the hands as stepping for the second leap.

Still, they were tied by a long rope. The second leap was enough to reach the top of the wall, but because of the rope, the one at the bottom was stuck hanging.

The one at the top immediately pulled the other one up until both of them reached the top of the wall.

They ducked down while looking around, finding the pair of the patrol would take a long time to get to them.

So, both of them nodded and attached the rope to the side of the wall before jumping down. They couldn't do another stunt with the demons as their cushions, so they had to use the rope to let them decrease the altitude before one of them cut the rope so that both of them fell to the ground.

Since the rope was cut by one of them, the rest of the rope followed the other person. There was no way anyone would find any evidence about their infiltration.

Both of them nodded with a serious expression as they used the dark alley as their cover to move through the city.

"What should we do now? We can go to the mansion now, but if we use light to search for anything in your family mansion, we'll be noticed easily." Anna whispered.

"We go there and wait until the sun is up. I know the mansion the most, so I know the place to hide."

Anna nodded as they started moving again. When they reached the main street, they looked around first to make sure no one saw them before leaping to the other side, approaching the mansion.

Because they weren't used to this, it took them two hours to finally arrive near the mansion.

"There are two guards on the gate, I don't see any patrols, but I believe we'll see one soon. We have to observe their pattern first before making a move," said Anna while examining the mansion.

"Then, let's move to the back first. There is a huge tree at the back of the mansion which we can use as a cover. And the wall there is a fixed wall, not one with railing pattern, which can be seen through like this." Noel suggested as he pointed to the right, asking her to follow him.

Anna nodded and started moving again. At the same time, they maintained their distance from the mansion to make sure they could see if there were any guards patrolling the mansion.

Surprisingly, Anna only found one guard as if there was a lack of fund for this mansion. Anna didn't know that Noel was aware of this lack of security this whole time. After all, his grandfather had investigated this place.

They looped around the mansion and finally reached the back of the mansion. As he said earlier, no one could see through the wall and there was a huge tree at the corner. If they wanted to observe the mansion, they could do it from there.

Anna and Noel exchanged looks before nodding their heads as a signal. In that instant, they moved to the wall and leaped to the top of the wall. The wall wasn't that high, so it was easy for them to go past

the wall. Normally, this would be impossible because of the number of guards patrolling the mansion, but the Royal Family seemed to be inviting him by using this amount of guards.

They hid behind the trees to check whether there was any light or not inside the mansion.

"What should we do next? The mansion should be locked or any thieves can simply enter." Anna asked again.

Noel also agreed to that opinion and waved his hand. "There is one place that shouldn't be locked."

"Where is it?" Anna asked while following him to the other corner of the mansion.

"The servant quarter. It's separated from the mansion, so we should be able to find something there."

Noel pointed at a small building on the corner. This place was used to be a living quarters for the maids and other servants.

As soon as they reached the servant quarter, Anna hurriedly went to the door and opened it, only to find it locked.

"Wait, it's locked as well. Do we have to break the window?" Anna asked in confusion.

"Why do you want to use the door?" Noel shook his head helplessly as he walked to the other part of the building. However, there wasn't a single thing in this area other than grasses and wall.

"What are we going to do here?"

Noel lowered his body and started digging the ground.

"What are you doing?" Anna became even more confused.

"There is a hole on the other side where we can enter. Then, we just have to go to a room, which shouldn't be locked to retrieve the mansion's key. Also, help me dig!"

"What the hell? How do you even know there's a hole there?"

"I was the one who broke it to sneak into this place."

"You what? Are you sneaking so that you can steal the maids—"

"Your mind is so dirty." Noel shook his head helplessly. "I often bought my maid some stuff like better clothes and since it would bring the jealousy of other maids, I had to do it like this."

"What kind of relationship do you have with your maids? To even do something like that..."

"I simply treated the people who treated me good better." Noel snorted. "Hurry up and help me."

Anna made a wry smile, thinking, 'Are you indirectly implying that I'm the exact opposite?'

Chapter 229 Weird Ancestry

Anna helped digging the soil while making a wry smile. As Noel said earlier, there was indeed a hole on the other side, allowing them to go inside the building.

She even wondered why no one repaired it, but if it was Noel's fault, then she could understand why they didn't want to repair it and only closed it with the dirt.

The hole was located in the kitchen, so Noel smiled because of a nostalgic feeling, looking at this kitchen again.

He immediately left the kitchen with no door and walked through the hall way until he reached a certain door.

Without hesitation, he opened the door that wasn't locked at all. Anna was surprised that this door was unlocked, considering he had tried to open other doors and they were all locked.

Noel didn't even bother to explain it to her as he immediately went to the cupboard where his maid stored her clothes.

There were still some left over maid clothes inside as well as corset and underwear.

"What are you doing? Do you have that kind of hobby?" Anna's eyebrows twitched.

Noel just tossed the corset to her to shut her up while rummaging the closet, finding a huge ring at the very bottom. He immediately pulled it up and showed the thirty keys hanging on that ring.

"See? The mansion's keys." Noel smirked.

"Seriously? Shouldn't the one who have those keys are the master of the house, the head maid and the head butler?" Anna widened her eyes in shock.

"She is my maid, so of course, she will have one. If not, how could I live lazily in the past?" Noel shrugged. "I guess, there's an advantage why I was lazy in the past."

"Don't give an excuse just to boost your ego." Anna rolled her eyes.

"Whatever. With this, we can enter the mansion." Noel shrugged and walked away. This time, they left the living quarters with the front door before patching up the hole to make it look like no one came.

After that, Noel opened the door behind the mansion to enter.

"Now that we're here, where are we going to hide? We can only investigate this place in the morning, right? Since we don't want anyone to see the light inside the mansion."

"I'm going back to my room." Before Noel walked to his room on the second floor, he looked at Anna with a serious expression. "Though, I do want to warn you something. If I ask you to go out, I want you to go out."

"Huh?" Anna was confused. They were investigating this mansion together, so it didn't really make sense. However, there was one thing that reminded her. It was the family's secret room where they stored the most important items in the household. Hence, Anna nodded in agreement. "Alright."

Noel nodded and started walking to the second floor. No one seemed to be taking care of the mansion when he saw the dust on the carpet as well as other decorations inside.

It also meant that no one would bother to go inside the mansion.

'So, this is the Ardagan Family's mansion.' Anna looked around. When they reached the main stairs that led to the second floor, she was stopped by a huge painting.

It was a painting of a couple. Instead of Count Ardagan and his wife, there was another pair painted on this, signifying their importance to this family.

The man had spiky black hair and stern face. He wore a military uniform with a huge diamond star on his chest, signifying his status.

'Diamond star? If we're looking into the history of this kingdom, there was only one person bestowed a Diamond Star. He was Simeon Ardagan, the greatest commander in history, the one who led the Muivell Kingdom to its peak. He was also the creator of the Demon Extermination Army, which had changed its name to Demon Banner Army.

'Wait a minute. Demon Banner Army, Noel, and Simeon Ardagan. Are there connections between them? Is there a reason why Count Ardagan faked his death and sent Noel to the Demon Banner Army? Does he know something that no one knows about Simeon Ardagan?

'If you look at the painting again, that woman...' Anna gasped, looking at the woman. She had long silver hair, different from the Sword Saint's white hair. She had a gentle gaze and wore a beautiful dress, but the blue-colored necklace on her neck didn't escape Anna's eyes.

'Isn't that the Blue Ocean Pearl? It's said to be the best to Spirit Conductor. Now that I think about it, I have seen her face somewhere... There is almost no record about the Sword Saint's sister, but now that I think about it, I have seen her face in the Greenwood Kingdom's Royal Castle.

'Huh? Isn't she supposed to be the Greenwood Kingdom's princess? But her brother is the Sword Saint, right? I haven't heard anything about the Sword Saint being a royalty. This is weird, very weird. What a mess up family tree...

'His ancestor is the greatest general in history, this is a known fact. However, I don't think there are many people who know that his ancestor's wife was a princess of the Greenwood Kingdom. And his ancestral uncle is actually the Sword Saint. What's wrong with this family?'

Anna clutched her head as she couldn't come up with a reason to connect all of them.

Noel glanced at her and asked, "What's wrong?"

"Is there any library in your mansion? We can read there with the Moon Blessing, right? There's no need for light."

"I have tried reading in the dark in the Sword Saint's tomb. The words are kinda blurry as if my eyes are not used to reading like that." Noel shook his head. "That's why I suggest to wait for the morning since we need light to read."

"Seriously? Why didn't I ask this question earlier because it was weird that we could see the dark with the Moon Blessing but we needed light to read?"

Noel shrugged. "I don't know the exact reason. I think the Moon Blessing is a kind of ability that enhances our eyes, but because our eyes are not built that way, we have a hard time adjusting to it. Have you ever read something inside a carriage?"

"Yeah. I felt sick because of the continuous bumps on the road."

"I felt similar when I read using the Moon Blessing. It's fine for a while, but if you read for a few minutes or even hours, you will be like that. So, I'm going to bed early so that I can immediately investigate when the sun is up! Bye." Noel yawned while walking away.

Chapter 230 Test It?

The next morning.

The sunlight gradually entered his room as Noel let out a soft moan while gradually opening his eyes. It had been a while since he slept in his previous bed.

It was nostalgic but also made him feel lonely, knowing that there were no servants or parents in this mansion anymore.

An image of his maid suddenly came to his room to greet him in the morning and change his clothes even flashed in his mind. Her voice saying, 'Good morning, Young Master,' also rang in his ears.

Noel looked at the ceiling and let out a sigh. 'I guess the time has changed.'

When he was about to go up, he suddenly felt his arm being restrained as if someone pulled him.

"!!!" Noel hurriedly turned around and saw Anna sleeping beside him. "Huh, what?"

Noel's mind became crazy in that instant.

'What's happening right here? Why does Anna sleep beside me? Did something happen last night? What did I do last night?' Noel's mind tried their best to recall every single detail.

...

Last night.

Noel opened his room with the key and smiled, looking at this familiar room. The tables, the cupboard, and even the floor was covered with dust. However, Noel didn't pay attention to it as he immediately went to the bed.

"I guess I have to change the sheet," Noel muttered. "Where is the sheet again? Is it in the servant quarter? No, they're too small for this. So, I guess I have to go to the storage."

Noel turned around and saw Anna entering his room. "So, this was your room?"

"Wait here. Don't go anywhere." Noel hurriedly left the room to grab some clean sheet. Of course, there would be no clean sheet in this house since they should have been covered with dust. However, everything in the storage should be better since they had been folded neatly. Only a small part of them is covered in dust. They could be cleaned a bit with a few flaps.

Meanwhile, Anna looked around the room. "This was Noel's room. It's kinda similar to what I have."

She walked around while touching the cupboard and the table, wondering if they had any significance to Noel.

"He would still be living in this place." Anna muttered while looking around with her Moon Blessing.

Though, she couldn't do anything as Noel had gone back with a new sheet. He started changing the sheet carefully as if he had done it so many times.

"I guess you have gotten used to change your sheet by yourself instead of making your servants do it." Anna wanted to tease him, but it soon backfired as Noel snorted. "Yeah. I won't get used to this if you didn't ask your father for my parents execution."

"Wait, wait. I know that I'm in the wrong for that, but your father was the one who arranged it, right?"

"You're going to wash your hands with that?" Noel rolled his eyes as he had finished changing his sheet and returned his own sheet to the storage. Since no one bothered to enter the mansion, the new sheet would be getting covered with dust again after a while.

As soon as he finished preparing his bed, Noel fell down on his bed with a relaxed expression. "Finally done."

"Ehm, where should I stay?" Anna asked with a wry smile.

"There is a guest room at the corner of the second floor. You can sleep there."

"Then, where is the new sheet?"

"In the storage room."

"I mean, where is the storage room?"

"Who knows? Go suffer by yourself." Noel chuckled as he started taking off his boots and robe to make himself more comfortable. "I guess we can't really wash our bodies here since there's no running water. Well, it's not much of a problem."

Noel immediately sneaked into his quilt and waved his hand to Anna. "There you have it. Go sleep with the dust."

...

That was what happened last night according to his memory. There should be nothing that happened since he had made Anna suffer through the night by forcing her to sleep there.

However, he didn't understand how Anna slept next to him.

It seemed that the shocked reaction he let out earlier woke Anna up.

"Mhm?" Anna opened her eyes and saw Noel next to her. "Good morning."

"Morning? What did you do last night? You must be taking advantage of me!" Noel gritted his teeth.

"What do you mean taking advantage of you? Well, I guess I kinda did? I don't want to sleep in that dust covered bed, so instead of searching for the storage room, why don't I just sleep with you? This way, we can hide in the same room and I don't need to bother myself to inhale the dust on the bed." Anna answered with sleepy eyes.

"Huh?" Noel's body trembled. It seemed that he was too wary against her that his mind thought of all the bad things that could happen to him.

Anna misunderstood Noel's relief as disappointment as she couldn't help but smirk, teasing Noel. "What's wrong? Disappointed that we didn't do anything last night? You are the one having the dirty mind here. You must be thinking that we're—"

Before she finished her words, Noel looked at her in disgust. "Woah, your ego is so high that it goes to the sky."

"I can't help it since I'm born this beautiful." Anna made a smug smile as if she was proud of her beautiful face.

,m "Yeah. If only your heart is as beautiful as your face. I guess the more beautiful you are, the more dangerous your heart is." Noel snorted.

"What did you say?" Anna gritted her teeth.

"I'm just stating the fact. If a scandal like this spreads, I'm afraid that my reputation will be smeared by yours."

"I should be the one saying that. If what you said is true, there's no way you made me go to Earl Hawkins and received the recognition of those people!" Anna smirked. "You're the one chickening because you don't dare to do it."

Noel pushed her down, grabbed her hands and and looked into her eyes. "So, should we test it?"