

S vs Rebirth 291

Chapter 291 Dilemma

The sly smile on Anna's face already gave Noel enough information that she was planning on doing something.

"We don't have time to do that, Noel. Don't you think it's better for us to bath in it together?"

"..." Noel was speechless by her question. The answer to that question was obviously yes. But never in his wildest dream that Anna would suggest it.

As a noble woman, she had to maintain the purity of her body. That was what she had been doing until now when taking a bath in a river or lake.

When she asked him to use the Spirit Seal to tell the truth, he was shocked at first because he had to touch her waist.

There was an instance where she embraced him, but that was for the sake of hiding from an imminent danger, so he thought nothing much about it.

That was why the time when she slept on the same bed as him baffled him that much. He believed that Anna wouldn't dare to do it because she had to maintain her image.

If people knew that she had slept with him, whether something happened or not, she would be judged by the people's eyes. Yet, she dared to do it with an excuse.

And now, Anna asked him to bathe together. It was already beyond what they had done this whole time.

If they had to take a bath together, it meant Noel could see her body. She didn't seem to be a noble anymore.

"You..." Noel bit his lips. If he took advantage of it, he would certainly benefit from it, considering Anna Stargaze was considered one of the most beautiful women in the kingdom. However, there was a line that he shouldn't cross.

If people knew that he had taken a bath with her, his reputation could be smeared as well, causing a lot of trouble. Even the marquis might forget about the relationship with his father and come to take his life.

Anna might know about this and took advantage of his situation. She knew that Noel couldn't say anything about them bathing together because it would cause his downfall as well.

Noel didn't realize that Anna thought nothing of it. Her train of thought was simple. She would provoke him to make him take a step back, showing her dominance. This would give her the confidence to defeat Noel who had beaten her twice.

There wasn't a single perverted or scheming thought in her mind.

"What's wrong? You're going to back off today?" Anna smirked, teasing Noel. "It seems that I won't be the one chickening out."

"!!!" In that instant, Noel understood Anna's motivation in doing this. His expression was distorted. "You... You're doing something like this just for that? Are you serious?"

"You have defeated me twice, so I'm going to win this time!" Anna nodded with a serious expression.

Noel facepalmed, annoyed. "Are you dumb? No, you are dumb! Have you forgotten the fact that you're a noble daughter from a marquis household? Do you know what it means to bath together with someone, especially a man of the same age?"

Anna widened her eyes and forgot about this. It might be due to the fact that Noel's father was her father's best friend, she thought it would be fine doing this. After all, the Ardagan Family was as strong as the Stargaze Family. Their rank might be lower, but their financial power closed that gap.

In other words, the worst case scenario would be them hiding this fact. However, she forgot the fact that the Ardagan Family had lost their power.

Anna felt slightly embarrassed for getting obsessed in defeating Noel that she forgot about many things.

But if she admitted she forgot about it, Noel would take that opportunity to fight back. So, she could only use her trump card.

"Are you chickening out, Noel? If you are, just admit it." Anna smirked. "This is between us, not between the son of the Ardagan Family and the daughter of the Stargaze Family. If you are afraid, then just admit it."

"..." Noel was speechless. On the one hand, he had to avoid staining his own honor as a former noble. On the other hand, there was also an opportunity in this small battle.

He was going to use his second identity soon and Anna was the only one who knew his plan. However, Anna didn't know what kind of appearance he would have again.

It would give him a leverage in their situation, allowing him to take advantage of the rumor and strike her.

Meanwhile, if Anna spread the rumor that Noel had taken a bath with her, nothing would change because he was a former noble while Anna was the most talented woman in the kingdom. In the end, she would only smear her own reputation.

In other words, there was nothing to lose if he continued.

With that thought in mind, Noel suddenly took off his shoes and dropped his bag as if he was planning to take off his clothes. "Afraid of you? In your dream."

"Haha, is that so?" Anna also unbuttoned her shirt as if planning on doing the same.

Noel's eyebrows twitched as he closed his eyes to avoid any impure thoughts. After all, the moment he made his move, Anna would win.

Noel also forgot about one thing. Dimitri was tailing him in order to protect him.

At the top of the hill, Dimitri was flabbergasted when he saw Noel and Anna taking off their clothes. From what he found so far, they were going to take a bath together.

When he watched their action, Dimitri's eyebrows were twitching. His hand reached for his sword. "That whore. How dare she seduce the young master? Is she going to sully the young master's reputation? No, wait..."

Dimitri paused for a moment. "Now that I think about it, Master loves the story about our ancestor... If I'm not wrong, the ancestor's wife... Don't tell me, Master's real plan is to make them fall in love like what happened to the ancestor? From enemy to lover situation?

"Then, what is actually my role? Protecting the young master? Or making their love bloom? That's right. That Anna even dared to sleep on the same bed as the young master... Then, should I kill all those people from the Supreme Devil Organization to give them more time? No, they assumed those people would be finding this place soon and I shouldn't interfere if it wouldn't kill the young master even if it means losing a precious treasure. What should I do then?"

Dimitri never expected that the biggest dilemma in his life was caused by the rash action of two young people.

Chapter 292 Scared

"Hehe, are you disappointed? I come prepared this time." Anna proudly puffed her chest, showing the swimsuit she had prepared this whole time.

This white swimsuit covered from her shoulder to her thighs, so Noel had no way to see her body.

On the other hand, Noel, who was expecting to bathe separately, came unprepared. He might be able to go without a shirt, but he had to wear pants this time.

And seeing how Anna bragged about it showed how much she had prepared for it.

As soon as they reached in front of the basin, Noel asked, "Looking at how prepared you are, don't tell me you're actually looking forward to it? Looking forward to take a bath with me? How perverted are you?"

"Wha—" Anna didn't expect that Noel could strike her with those questions. "I'm not a pervert!"

"But you didn't deny that you're looking forward to take a bath with me, right?" Noel stood in front of her, glaring at her.

Anna felt like Noel was giving an intense pressure, forcing her to step back. "I'm looking forward to it to defeat you. Look at you, aren't you disappointed?!"

Noel kept pushing forward while saying, "Disappointed huh? What if I said I'm disappointed? Are you going to strip?"

Anna's body trembled. "Strip? You are joking. Can't you feel the tingling sensation on your feet? You must feel that pain... If you go there with naked body, you're going to be destroyed by the pain."

"So, you knew and didn't tell me about it? You must want to kill me."

"No... I didn't know about the pain."

A smirk suddenly appeared on Noel's face as he asked, "So, you didn't know about the pain. Then, I guess you're scared now because you don't dare to go in without anything? You must be afraid of the pain... If you don't dare, why don't you go out right now?"

Anna wanted to answer while taking a step back before she felt her back touched the wall.

"!!!" Anna glanced to the back and realized she was trapped. Noel took this opportunity to slam the wall, preventing her from escaping.

"This is the last time you can leave... What will you choose? If you're afraid of pain, I suggest you to escape right away!"

"You... You can't scare me like that! My pain resistance is stronger than you! It's just I know that if I go there, you will be scared to dive."

"No, no. I'm a gentleman. Unlike a pervert like you, I know the basic courtesy. So, it's ladies first... You can go first if you're not scared." Noel smirked.

"You are just trying to escape, aren't you? Just tell me if you're scared. There's no need to threaten me like this." Anna smiled slyly as if she recognized Noel's plan.

However, she slightly pushed Noel away and stood in front of the basin while pointing at it. "Come on. Let's jump together. The one who doesn't jump is the chicken."

"Do you think I'm afraid of you?" Noel snorted and stood next to her, showing his willpower.

The water was flooding the cave, but it only reached their heel. However, the pain they had to endure in their feet were like they were standing on top of blazing fire.

The scorching pain made their feet numb and their bodies shake. They couldn't imagine what kind of pain they would feel if they dove into this pool of Body Strengthening Liquid. The pain would be all over their body and they might pass out.

If they passed out, they might die from other causes like drowning or even the people from the Supreme Devil Organization.

Noel took advantage of this to make Anna's victory disappear because he had changed the competition from taking a bath together to pain resistance.

But when those two standing at the edge of the basin, staring at the pool, they were scared to jump in.

"Ladies first. Show me if you dare to do it or not. Or I'll take this as my win." Noel snorted..

"Your victory? No! You also don't dare to do it. If you're so confident, why don't you jump in right away? If I don't dare to do it, that would be your victory."

"Do you think I don't know your method? You must like to see me being tortured while you're entering the pool slowly while adjusting the pain."

"No way. Just tell me you're scared."

"No, you're the one who's scared."

"Just admit it that we both are scared by the pain." Anna glared at him while pointing at the pool. "Let's jump together. By the count of three, we're jumping in. Do you dare to do it?"

"So, you admit that you're scared."

"I'm asking whether if you dare or not. The pool is not that deep, so our head should be able to stay afloat after the initial dip." Anna smirked.

"Fine. Let's go in together. I'll lower myself to you and accept your challenge."

"Then, let's do it."

Anna and Noel looked at the pool together.

"One..." Anna started the count.

"Two..." Noel also did it to show he wasn't scared.

And finally, they both said at the same time. "Three!"

Anna and Noel jumped into the air together as they were prepared to dive at the same time. However, Noel jumped once more with his Hyper Jump that allowed him to kick the air to stay afloat, letting Anna fall first. "I'm doing this to make sure someone is awake!"

"You..." Anna realized she was tricked by Noel. However, Noel was underestimating her reflex.

She suddenly smirked before submerging as if telling him, "I know you're going to do it. That's why I jumped slightly higher than you."

Because she was in the air longer, she had the time to react and grabbed Noel's waist before he escaped from her reach.

"!!!" Noel's face became pale, knowing what would happen next.

Noel and Anna realized that they both had plans to trick each other. But in the end, Anna managed to cling to him and drag him to the pool.

Boom!

Chapter 293 Memory

Boom!

Both of them submerged into the water while staring at each other.

However, a sharp pain suddenly struck their whole body and went straight to their mind.

"!!!" They widened their eyes.

Even though they had prepared, the pain going through their body was beyond their imagination. Even Noel opened his mouth, coughing the air out.

Anna, on the other hand, still held out while gritting her teeth. Her willpower wasn't at the level of a fifteen years old girl after all.

But to her surprise, Noel also endured the pain pretty well. Although his body was shaking, his expression gradually returned to normal.

At that moment, both of them stomped the ground and came to the surface to get some air.

"Haaaa!" They gasped for some air.

"Kh." Noel gritted his teeth. All the water covering his body was giving him pain. It felt like he was burned alive, but at the same time, it felt like his body was being twisted by an unknown force.

Tears were coming out of his eyes due to the pain, but Noel didn't let out a single sound. His consciousness became fuzzy, but Noel still managed to stay awake. Due to him opening his mouth, the water also flooded his mouth for a moment, causing the pain to enter his mouth as well.

There was nothing he could think in this pain, let alone doing anything. In the end, Noel closed his eyes to get used to the pain as soon as possible.

Looking at Noel's reaction, Anna couldn't help but smile.

She heard that when one was close to dying, their entire life would flash before them. Anna didn't know if it was due to the close to dying or she had experienced the same pain, there was a scene that appeared before her.

The image was about her lying down on the ground, writhing in pain.

"Aaaaahhhh!" Anna was screaming, her body was convulsing, and her voice was shaking. Her right arm had turned blue and her face had become pale.

Next to her was a green snake whose head was already crushed.

"Kh. I was poisoned by the Green Viper." Anna gritted her teeth. Her tears kept flowing and she continued gasping for air.

The poison continued to spread and the pain felt like she was being skinned alive. The sharp pain jolted her mind again and again.

This was the tenth day of her survival in the wilderness. She, who never saw the world, hadn't eaten anything during the past ten days.

So, the pain wasn't the only thing she had to face. The exhaustion, hunger, and dehydration also struck her at the same time, almost killing her.

"NO! I don't want to die!" She looked at the viper and started rolling her body to there.

"The Green Viper might be toxic, but it's said that the body is the antidote." Anna looked around to see whether she could cook it or not. But looking at the condition of her arm, she might die before she could do anything about it.

She looked at the disgusting viper corpse and faced two options: eat it or die.

Anna gritted her teeth and shouted, "I refuse to die!"

She grabbed the viper and opened her mouth, taking a huge bite of the viper body. The foul odor and the meat filled with skin and blood instantly filled her mouth.

"Ueee..." She vomited in an instant as she had never tasted something as disgusting as this one. She just wanted to throw up everything from the mouth and cleansed it with water. But it was impossible for her to do it.

In fact, if she didn't eat the viper, she would die. Not only she was in pain, but she had to endure the disgusting meat.

Facing the death itself, Anna had no other choice but to take another bite.

She wanted to throw up in an instant. Her expression was distorted and became blue. Her tears were overflowing.

"U—Mph!" She covered her mouth with her hand as if forcing her to swallow everything.

Everything gradually came down her throat. Her eyes had lost their focus and she was about to pass out.

Even then, she endured everything and tried to use her hand to reach for the bloody meat. She pinched the meat and stuffed it into her mouth.

She didn't know how many times she put a piece of meat into her mouth because the next thing she remembered, she had passed out.

She woke up a few hours later as the green viper corpse had disappeared.

Remembering that kind of memory made her awake. This pain was nothing to that pain and disgust.

If she had to choose, she would rather experience this pain a hundred times than enduring that disgusting moment once.

After recounting her past life, she took another glance at Noel who had fully immersed in the pain to get used to it.

With a small smile on her face, she also closed her eyes, thinking, 'Now that I think about it, why did I not hate you after everything you caused? Is it because I want you to be a tall tower for the kingdom?

'No, I don't think so.' Anna tried to recall something in her mind but to no avail. 'Still, thinking about that experience... The green viper's disappearance might be related to you... You were the one protecting me when I endured all that. Should I say you protected me or watched me?

'But well, I guess you were protecting me since due to that experience, my body developed a poison resistance that allowed me to do many things after that.

'But that experience is too brutal, right? Is it simply because you thought I killed your parents in our past lives?' Anna had gotten no answer. But she certainly held no hatred toward Noel as everything he caused her ended up benefiting her. There were also other things that he did that lessened that hatred.

'This is kind of ironic... In the past life, you were the one trying to lessen the hatred, while in this life, I'm the one trying to change you. Is it truly a coincidence?' Anna muttered in her mind as she gradually became immersed in strengthening her body.

Chapter 294 Effect

Three hours later.

Anna opened her eyes, realizing that the pain had subsided significantly. It might be the pain had subsided or her body had gotten used to it, but there was another thing that changed in her body.

She raised her hand and tried to make a grip. She even grabbed a stone and tried to crush it.

"Mhm?" She cracked the stone and gradually split it open. She assessed her change inwardly, 'My strength is... doubled?'

'The Body Strengthening Liquid is a unique liquid from this mountain. It's said that the mountain itself has a unique rock formation, trapping the water in it.

'When the rain comes, the water is stored and compressed by the rock. And that water flow through the gap and eventually reach the pointy rock above our head, allowing it to fall one droplet after another.

'No one has ever found the truth, but that's the best version of the explanation. However, the concentrated water is indeed useful to our body. Just by being exposed to it, the water will try to enter our pore to change the water in our body, causing our flesh, bone, and skin to change.

'If we drink it, it'll do the same to our organs, but the organs won't be able to take it, causing people to die.

'That's why the best way to take advantage of this water is to bathe in it to reinforce our muscle.

'Sadly, we can't keep this water since the Supreme Devil Organization is here. With a huge demon carrying it, it's possible to transport all the water in this place, which will cause a lot of trouble for the Demon Banner Army in the future.

'It's better to destroy this place and inform the Demon Banner Army so that they can dispatch a team to investigate the liquid itself.'

Anna took a deep breath and wondered when they would go out. On the one hand, she didn't want to come out because it would keep increasing her strength. On the other hand, they couldn't be too long in this place. Not only the efficacy of the water would keep decreasing, but the Supreme Devil Organization might find them.

'Well, Noel should already calculate it. I should just focus until Noel wakes up.'

Anna decided not to put too much thought in it since Noel would do the rest.

As Anna expected, Noel opened his eyes three hours after that. He had gotten used to this pain and checked his body.

'Hmm, this is?' Noel noticed something different from Anna.

[Mission: Body Strengthening Liquid]

[Description: Go to the Geolythic Mountain with Anna Stargaze and bath in the Body Strengthening Liquid]

[Reward: Sword Aura +3 Level and 20 SP]

[Penalty: Someone gets it.]

He checked his skill and confirmed that his Sword Aura had raised by three levels.

Sword Aura (4/5)

However, there was one more thing he saw through from this development.

When he channeled his Spiritual Energy from his body, he realized he could do it more fluidly.

His organ couldn't be refined by the Body Strengthening Liquid, so there was no change when he tried to use his Muscle Strengthening Technique. But he noticed the change when he used Spirit Aura Breathing.

The Spiritual Energy could easily travel on his skin and body.

'Anna said this liquid is strengthening one's muscle, but the Muscle Strengthening Technique doesn't have any change. Instead, the Spirit Aura Breathing, which release Spiritual Energy to cover the skin, has a more fluid flow.

'It seems that the effect of this liquid is to smoothen the flow of the Spiritual Energy by refining anything that it touches.'

To prove it, he channeled his Spiritual Energy to the inside of his mouth, which had been exposed by the water earlier when coughing out the air.

As expected, he could make the Spiritual Energy flow easier in that area. In other words, Anna's explanation was wrong.

'Did she lie to me? No, by the looks of it, she also didn't know about it.'

Noel fell silent for a moment and thought about something.

'I see. It seems that Ardagan has known about the effect of the liquid. That's why the mission reward is Sword Aura's levels. That's basically the reward for refining this liquid and the 20 Skill Points are the reward from Ardagan.

'So, if I'm more careful with the mission's description, I can see through the real reward as well as the effect of what I'm planning to get.

'This is good. Not only can I control a bit of the mission, but I can also know what I'm getting at. This is like a clairvoyance.'

Noel smiled and realized he could take advantage of this liquid one more time. With that thought in mind, Noel stood up from the pool while glancing at Anna, who seemed to have just woken up as well.

"Noel? Are you done?"

"Yeah. I have found out something. But the price for that information... I want you to promise me something." Noel looked at Anna with a serious expression, adding inwardly, 'Thanks to your foolish action by dragging me inside, I can find this truth, so I don't mind sharing a bit.'

Anna was confused for a moment but Noel wasn't someone who would do meaningless thing. So, she agreed without hesitation. "Sure. What do you want me to do?"

,m "Judging by our condition, it seems that we will be able to go back to the fort by moving close to a river. It means we won't have any problems with water supply. That's why I want to borrow your water bottle."

"Hmm? For what?" Anna tilted her head in confusion.

"I want to bring as much water as possible before burning all this water away." Noel explained.

"But what can you do with those two water bottles? And with yours, it's four water bottles. I don't think that's enough water to use."

Noel fell silent for a moment, thinking about a solution. However, Anna seemed to remember something. "That's right. Don't you have that bag or something that can bring a lot of water?"

Chapter 295 Storage

"I have something like that, but it's only for taking out things. It's not meant to store anything." Noel shook his head, knowing the idea came from the town they saved.

Back then, he took out a lot of water gallons. So, Anna must think that he had the ability to store the water.

However, the reality was much different. Noel couldn't use the shop to store things.

To his surprise, even after knowing that fact, Anna suggested another thing as if this was what she had in mind. "No, no. I'm talking about taking out those big gallons and pouring all the water out so that we can get it out."

"Hmm?" Noel suddenly understood her intention. "Now that I think about it, that's possible."

"Though, we will have another problem, which is how to transport all of them. I mean, if we have a horse, we can buy a carriage or something. But how in the world will we be able to cross this mountain with all this luggage."

Noel thought for a moment and said, "That's possible. Though, I need your cooperation."

"I understand. What should I do?"

"Wait a minute." Noel walked out of the cave to buy Water Gallons. He had ten Honor Points left, so he could buy five water gallon.

However, Noel had a better idea in order to utilize it. It was possible now that their strength had increased.

"What are you planning to do?" Anna asked while walking to him.

Noel pointed at the gallons and said, "Help me pour all the water out except for the last one. And don't forget to wear your clothes while I'm going somewhere."

"I understand." Anna agreed without hesitation and watched Noel leaving to somewhere. Since she had a task, she immediately followed it through by pouring all the water out, except for the last gallon. Though, she was curious why Noel wanted to leave one gallon out.

It was quite unexpected when Noel suddenly returned with a tree trunk not long after. The tree was quite big and long and he still carried it by using his strength alone. It proved how much Noel had gotten stronger.

After Noel put down that tree, he asked Anna. "Can you fill up those four gallons with the Body Strengthening Liquid?"

"Yes." Anna immediately did her job while wondering what Noel planned to do.

When she returned, she was surprised that Noel was cutting the trunk and creating a basin in that trunk so that they could store the water inside.

"This is..." Anna gasped. The trunk itself was quite big. The length alone was enough to fit both of them inside and the diameter was three times of their bodies. Although it wasn't enough to store all the Body Strengthening Liquid, they could take at least half of it.

That amount should be enough to take advantage of.

"We have to fill the trunk with water immediately." Noel said while grabbing one of the gallons and starting to pour everything inside the trunk.

"Are you planning to carry this trunk?"

"Yes. It's going to be impossible if each of us carry one to cross the mountain terrain. But if we carry this together, we should be able to leave this place without alarming the demon." Noel nodded with a serious expression.

"Ah!" Anna understood Noel's plan but there was still one question.. "How do we transport them? I mean, we can carry it, but the water is going to splash anywhere."

"I'll show you how later. For now, let's fill it to the brim."

"Alright."

Anna and Noel immediately worked hard to fill the trunk. It didn't take too long for them to finish filling the trunk. After that, Noel grabbed the part he cut earlier and peeled its outer layer.

"Huh? What are you planning to do with that thin outer layer? Are you going to use it as a lid? But once it's cut, it's impossible to patch it back up with your flame. This is not stone where you can use it to melt and attach them together." Anna explained.

This was the time Noel pointed at fifth gallon, "Now, bring that gallon to me and help me hold this thin layer."

Anna handed the gallon and grabbed the outer layer of the trunk, placing it right above the opening. There were only her fingers that stopped the outer layer to drop.

"I'm not a carpenter, so I can't make a container and its lid in an instant, but I can use my Spirit." Noel smirked. If he was a carpenter, he should be able to make a storage that allowed him to put the outer layer as a lid without doing anything special. But since he wasn't them, he took advantage of his power that differentiated him and the carpenter.

Noel poured the water out of the gallon and used his Ice Control to freeze this water.

"Ah!" Anna finally saw through Noel's plan. He was planning to splash the water and freeze them immediately to create a lid for this storage. And since it was made of ice, it would automatically attach itself to the trunk, so they didn't have to worry the lid would be tipped over if they made a sudden movement.

The thin layer of the skin was only to make the shape.

Noel kept freezing it from one point to another, carefully sealing the storage.

When he reached Anna's spot, Noel said with a serious expression. "Please endure it."

"Got it." Anna nodded and saw Noel pouring the water near her hands. The Ice Control soon froze the water, including the one that touched her hand.

Anna's fingers immediately went cold. If this continued, her fingers would become numb. However, she withstood the entire process without saying anything, knowing this was something she had to do.

After sealing that area, Noel helped her defrost the fingers and sealed the remaining area. "With this, it's done."

Noel took a step back and looked at the entire trunk, satisfied with his work. He even tried to tilt the trunk over to see if the water would spill or not.

As soon as he confirmed everything was safe, Noel said, "Alright. We now can do the rest of our job before leaving this place."

Chapter 296 Valuable Experience

After finishing the item that they wanted to transport, Noel put on his clothes and went back to the cave. The water level had decreased exponentially, since half of the water in the pool had gone.

The previously flooded cave had become dry with only a few puddles here and there.

Noel burned all those puddles of water to make sure the cave was entirely dry. After that, he placed his hand on the water surface before releasing the Undying Fire.

The black flame instantly covered the water surface, but to his surprise, the flame soon died out.

"Huh?" Noel widened his eyes in shock, seeing his Undying Fire who was supposed to be able to continue burning everything to stop. "This is... It seems that everything won't go according to my plan."

Noel sighed. "I can't burn this water down without continuously pouring my Spiritual Energy. Wait a moment, burn? Did I say it to Anna that I could burn things?"

"..." The sweats soon covered Noel's back as if he realized his blunder. No matter how smart Noel was, he was still a fifteen years old boy, whose experience was still lacking. This might be his biggest blunder so far. "Did I just give my identity away?"

Noel gulped down and glanced to the outside of the cave. He had made Anna stay outside the cave, but he still said about burning the water.

"But... Anna should have known about my fake identity, right? That means she is aware of my power as well... Though, I don't know where that knowledge comes from." Noel tried to make himself better, but the mistake truly brought him down this time.

"..." Whether it was fortunate or unfortunate, the blunder he made this time was in front of Anna, who seemed to have already known about that secret. If it was from anyone else, his secret wouldn't be safe.

But it was said that one's mistake could make them learn, and Noel wasn't someone who took this lesson poorly.

"Uh..." Noel bit his lips. "Have I grown a bit too accustomed to Anna that I start blabbering my secret subconsciously? My father said my mother is someone he can trust completely and shares his secrets with. But Anna and I are not like that..."

"If the world knows that I'm able to wield two elements and spirits at the same time, they will surely capture me or kill me. My body and Ardagan are worth to research for.

"Not only the kingdoms, but all kinds of organizations will chase me down. I shouldn't have made this kind of blunder in the future... No, I shouldn't have grown too attached to someone in case I blurt out a secret.

"That's right. I shouldn't have alcohol as well. I might have some tolerance with wine and a little alcohol, but if someone is forcing me out with a large amount of them, I'll be drunk.

"That's why I can't become too close to someone. I, Noel, shouldn't have any woman or drink alcohol from today onward until I reclaim the prestigious name of Ardagan Family."

Anna didn't realize that Noel had actually undergone this similar experience in the previous life. That blunder cost him a lot and he also swore not to have any woman or drink before he reclaimed his honor.

That was the reason why even though Noel was surrounded by women, but he never took any of them.

After that vow, Noel continued burning the rest of the water. He surely put this blunder in his heart, but since Anna already knew, he didn't hide it anymore.

He poured more Spiritual Energy and burned everything inside. Since he couldn't allow it to condense again, he chose to leave the cave open so that the steam could leave this place.

Meanwhile, he also felt that his inside was being torn open. He soon realized that the steam was actually a treatment for their inside.

They might be able to refine their skin by bathing, but they couldn't refine their organs since it would be too much for them. But steam was different. The steam was more mild compared to the concentrated water. If they took this treatment for a few hours, their body would completely transform.

This was the only thing that made Noel happy after his blunder. He left the cave while enduring the pain inside his body, finding Anna who was waiting for him.

"Let's go." Noel said while grabbing the trunk. "We have to leave this place as soon as possible."

"We should close the cave first."

"No, don't." Noel shook his head. "Trust me."

Anna looked at Noel's serious expression and decided to follow him. "Alright."

In this mission, Noel finally realized that no matter how prepared they were, one variable could lead to a change of plan. This might be the first failure of his plan and he sure gained a valuable experience from it.

However, Noel also wasn't aware of what was currently transpiring in the barrack.

Shale was watching over the training of the Apprentice Knights in the training ground before he noticed a few heads taking a peek at what happened inside the training ground.

"So, that's how they're training."

"There are a few who practices with their weapons. There are some who meditate? Why meditate?"

"Who knows..."

Shale furrowed her eyebrows before deciding to go to meet them.

"Look. The one sitting there should be the instru—" Before she could finish her words, Shale suddenly disappeared and startled them by appearing right before them. He moved so fast that they couldn't even follow his movement, making it look like he just teleported to them.

"Wo—"

"Woah?!"

"A ghost?!"

The kids were scared and fell to the ground.

Shale only smiled and asked, "What's wrong with you kids? Why are you peeking at the training ground?"

Shale didn't mind if one took a look at their training. The reason why the training ground was close to the entrance was because the people could take a glance at them and get inspired by their determination. This served as an advertisement.

But it was quite rare to see many kids coming at once. More importantly, each kids had nice clothes and tidy appearance as if they were a children of nobles, except for their manners.

In that instant, he remembered the kids that Noel took in which Septa talked about. "Hmm, you are... the street kids that Noel cares about."

Chapter 297 Sneaking In

"What is this..."

"What is this..."

"What is this..."

The same question echoed again and again as a bald muscular man gritted his teeth while roaring in anger. "What is this?!"

He was in front of the cave, looking at the empty basin. Due to Noel leaving the cave entrance open, the steam had come out of the cave. Some were trapped, but they wouldn't be able to collect the condensate. At least, the amount wouldn't be enough for them to do anything.

That was why the muscular guy was screaming in anger because this was what they were searching for.

"Who... Who leaked it? There is no way those bastards from the kingdom know about this place. Even I only managed to find this location after deciphering a lot of ancient texts." The muscular guy glared at the people he brought.

"That's..." The people were afraid because the bald guy might do something to them.

They remembered that the demon was alarmed before and said, "That's right... Sir, there is an intruder yesterday."

However, the next thing they realized, the guy's head had already been crushed by the muscular guy's hand. He shouted, "I know that already. They have been chased away by many Advanced Level Demons. And no demons alarm us afterward, do you think they're still alive?!"

The people panicked. On the one hand, they would die if they talked about something. On the other hand, if they didn't say anything, they would receive the same fate.

Knowing this fact made their body trembling in fear, trying to find a way to calm him down.

"Sir Bishop, the culprits shouldn't be that far from here. They might still be in this mountain."

Unfortunately for the one who was brave enough to step up, his head was flying. The Devil Bishop roared, "As I said, I know that already. I have made my demons to search for them. I told you they won't be here because they don't know anything about this cave.

"There must be a traitor in our ranks who leaks our information. And..." The guy stopped, glaring at his people as if implying that they were the prime suspects.

"Sir Bishop."

"We don't do th—!"

"We—!"

It was a massacre. The muscular guy didn't let them explain themselves. He didn't even trust them anymore, so he just murdered them in anger without thinking about torturing them for information.

Nonetheless, the guy was so angry that he didn't care about the condensate anymore and left the cave.

When he was about to fly away from the area, he noticed blood on top of the hill. From the trace of the blood alone, it was clear that at least several demons had died in this place.

However, their bodies were gone, leaving only the blood.

Noel and Anna didn't do anything about this. In fact, they didn't even notice a single demon in this area.

It was Dimitri who took action against the demons. Before they entered the range of detection of both Noel and Anna, he took care of them. He believed that the two could handle these demons before alarming the others, but he didn't want them to have their time get interrupted.

But when the muscular guy saw this trace, he became angrier as he knew the culprit was still alive.

"Whoever it is, I'm going to kill them!"

...

Noel and Anna didn't see the reaction of the Devil Bishop, who once took advantage of the Body Strengthening Liquid in the previous life. They were busy carrying this huge trunk to the Demon Banner Army Headquarters, not wanting anyone to spot it.

They didn't bother to rest in nearby villages because they didn't know what kind of threat they would possess.

Because the trunk was filled with water, it became quite heavy. It felt heavier than when it was only a simple trunk. Even with Anna and Noel's reinforced body, they still had a hard time carrying it.

Their speed was slow and ended up reaching the fort in one week instead of four days.

As soon as they reached the fort, they didn't go to the headquarter immediately. Instead, Noel asked Anna to bring the log to his place to get some water for them.

"What are you doing with this amount, Noel?" Anna asked, confused.

"Do you remember when I opened my mouth after diving into the water?"

"Yes."

"I have learned that..." Noel explained his finding as well as the steam method. It hadn't been proven, but he felt this was the right method, considering he felt a bit stronger after inhaling the steam when burning the water.

So, Noel planned to use this amount of water to reinforce his body and suggested Anna to take a part in it as well before turning in the rest of the water to the Demon Banner Army.

After listening to Noel's explanation, Anna agreed to it. They deserved this much after carrying it this far. And they wouldn't have any problems in getting a lot of Contribution Points after this, allowing them to get another reward.

After getting enough water out, Noel sealed the trunk again and brought this trunk to the Demon Banner Army.

Of course, it would be suspicious if they just went through the entrance. Hence, Noel and Anna came inside from the side, jumping over the wall to hide the fact they carried the Body Strengthening Liquid.

As one of the strongest people in the Demon Banner Army, Shale obviously noticed their presence and instantly appeared before them.

"Who dare to trespass in my Demon Banner Army?" Shale released his killing intent, preparing to take them down. But he was soon stunned when he realized Noel and Anna were the culprit.

Noel raised his hand to calm him down and said, "Hello, Sir Shale. I apologize if we sneak in, but there is a great reason for this. Do you think you can allow us to meet the commander without anyone noticing?"

Shale frowned, having a complex feelings because trespassing was not something he could tolerate. But he noticed the huge trunk that they carried, making him realize the reason for them to do this was related to this trunk.

Chapter 298 Confirming The Water

"This trunk?" Shale inspected the trunk and noticed it was sealed by ice. "What's in it?"

Noel thought Shale could be trusted, so he said, "An important liquid that can strengthen one's body. I'm planning to show it to the commander."

"..." Shale couldn't really allow such a thing, since it would look like anyone could meet the commander as they pleased. But Shale still remembered how the commander asked him to take care of Noel.

Since there was a special relationship between Noel and the commander, Shale said, "Alright. I can ask the commander about it. However, if you're doing this to not get spotted, just the fact that you're bringing a big trunk in the city is already giving away that information."

"What they see was a trunk, they didn't know there was a liquid inside since we covered the icy seal with clothes. As long as I could make something out of the remaining trunk, people would think I used it to make those." Noel explained.

"That's understandable." Shale thought for a moment and said, "I got the idea for you. Anyway, I'm going to discuss this with the commander first. Wait here."

"Understood. Thank you, Sir." Noel politely thanked him.

Shale walked to the main building to meet the commander immediately. Noel might claim a fake stuff, but he wasn't someone who would easily be deceived by a quack, so Shale chose to trust Noel in this matter.

Ultimately, Noel was the one who had to take the responsibility, so he didn't mind calling the commander.

...

"So, that's how it is..." The commander closed his eyes for a moment after listening to Shale.

"Yes, Sir." Shale nodded. "I personally believe that Noel is a smart kid. However, I'm still unsure whether he is telling the truth or not. I'll chase them away if you don't want to meet them."

The commander thought for a moment and rose from his seat. "Alright. Lead me to their place."

"Understood." Shale was quite surprised that the commander really believed everything that Noel brought.

Shale didn't know that the one who took care of Noel wasn't the commander, but the third prince. Although the commander was mostly neutral, it didn't change the fact that he was the third prince's subordinate. As long as the third prince didn't force him to do something beyond his code as a knight, he would help him as much as possible, including taking care of Noel.

He also remembered that the first time he got involved with Noel was when the Ancient Demon Tree appeared.

Noel wouldn't bring this matter to him if it was just a small matter, so the commander decided to meet Noel again.

They reached Noel's location in a few minutes, finding Noel and Anna sitting on the trunk.

"Commander." Noel and Anna stood up and immediately placed their right hand on their chest, saluting the commander.

"At ease." The commander nodded with a calm expression and glanced at the trunk. "Something inside that trunk? Looking at the ice that acts like a seal, it seems to be a liquid, which means Shale didn't lie."

"This is Body Strengthening Liquid. If you take a bath in it, you can refine your body. We have tested it and our strength should be doubled after that." Noel explained.

"What? Doubled?" Shale widened his eyes in shock.

"Yes. Not only that, but after taking a bath in this liquid, it'll smoothen the conductivity of your skin. In other words, you can let the Spiritual Energy flow better outside your body."

"Are you serious?" Shale was stunned. "Where did you get this liquid?"

"Geolythic Mountain. There seems to be people after this as well and I'm suspecting them to be from the Supreme Devil Organization. This is not a baseless claim because I can see that the demon's movement is actually coordinated... Even the Advanced Level Demon behaves not like a demon, but like a pet."

"Advanced Level Demon as a pet?"

"Yes. I'll give you the report later. But for now, please confirm the liquid."

The commander was the first one to make his move. He bent down his knees and said two words. "Fly. Break."

Suddenly, the ice started floating as if detaching itself from the trunk. After raising for one meter, the ice shattered into pieces before disappearing into thin air.

"..." This was the first time Noel saw the commander's ability. Unlike Anna, who was saved by this ability last time, Noel was too occupied with the Ancient Demon Tree, so seeing how his ice obeyed the commander truly startled him.

The commander ignored his shock and dipped his hand into this water, instantly feeling the pain like it was cut by many swords.

"Mhm?" The commander didn't have a change in expression. He calmly pulled his hand back and looked at it. "Is this poisonous?"

"No. That's the process of strengthening your skin." Noel shook his head.

The commander furrowed his eyebrows and tried to revolve his Spiritual Energy before muttering, "The conductivity is indeed getting better. I see, it seems that the longer your skin touch this, the better its effect."

"Yes. After a while, the effect will diminish. So, I suggest that once you get used to the pain, it's time for you to stop." Noel nodded.

"I see. What's about the rest of the water? I'm pretty sure that this is not the only water you found..."

"As I said earlier, the Supreme Devil Organization was planning to get it too. So, I took everything I could get and left that place after burning the rest of the water. The demons in that mountain acts on behalf of them, so we couldn't solve this problem any other way."

,m The commander paused for a moment before turning to Shale. "The one near the Geolythic Mountain is Hendry, right?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Inform Hendry to check the rest."

"Understood."

Before they finished their conversation, Noel added something. "Sir, the situation in that area is a bit abnormal. There are many Advanced Level Demons there. I'm afraid the one controlling those demons..."

"A far stronger person... Devil Bishop? Or even Devil Saint?" Shale narrowed his eyes.

"Tell Hendry to bring his Demon Hunting Squad to eliminate all threats in that area." The commander corrected his order as soon as he heard the situation. "Also, involve Septa in this. It seems that the Supreme Devil Organization has the ability to control those demons. Advanced Level Demons are still manageable, but it's going to be dangerous if they go for Peak Level Demons."

"Understood!"

Chapter 299 Reward

"To think there is a liquid like this." The commander muttered after ordering Shale. He glanced at Noel and Anna. "Are you two sure you want to give this to the Demon Banner Army?"

"Yes." Noel nodded.

"This liquid might not be losing to the Ancient Demon Tree."

"Yes, we know."

The commander looked at their expressions and finally let out a sigh. "Alright. I'll accept this liquid on behalf of the Demon Banner Army. As for your reward, what do you want?"

Noel and Anna exchanged looks before saying the same thing. "Contribution Points for Demon Crystals."

"!!!" The commander furrowed his eyebrows, never expecting that these two only wanted Demon Crystals.

Even Shale couldn't believe it.

"Haha, this water is enough to gain my favor. Having me as your helper should be a good thing, no? Yet, you only want Demon Crystals?"

"We know that the Demon Banner Army is focusing on Demons and each squad doesn't really treat anyone badly. That's why the commander's help might be a good thing, but for us, it's better to get stronger instead. We believe we're lacking in Spiritual Energy right now instead of your help." Noel explained.

He indirectly implied that if they got stronger, they could produce the same result again and again. And at that time, they could gain the commander's help. But for now, they needed more Spiritual Energy, thus their decision.

The commander thought for a moment and said, "Shale. Give each of them 500 Low Quality Crystals, 300 Mid Quality Crystals and 100 Advanced Quality Crystals."

"But, Sir..." Shale wanted to object, considering this water wasn't worth that much.

However, the commander only stated, "This is my investment toward the youngsters. They are ambitious and have shown the result. Just like Septa, show me that you're worthy of my investment."

Noel and Anna were surprised, never expecting this commander to be so generous.

For Noel, this many Demon Crystals would improve the amount of his Spiritual Energy by three times. Although it wouldn't be as far as becoming a Spirit Master, it was enough to become a solid Spirit Wielder. There would be many more missions that could give him the Spirit Abilities.

On the other hand, Anna had the same thought. Unlike Noel, her capacity in absorbing the Demon Crystals weren't doubled. So, she would have filled the Low Quality Crystal quota with this reward and the other two would be increased drastically as well.

With just a bit more training and Demon Crystals, she might become a Spirit Master. This was a huge opportunity.

Anna and Noel hurriedly thanked the commander for the generous reward. "Thank you very much."

"Mhm." The commander nodded. "That's right. If I'm not wrong, you two should have passed the requirement to graduate, right?"

"Yes. We're planning to graduate after this."

"Which squad do you want to go?"

"Demon Relief Squad." Both of them said the same thing without hesitation.

Even the commander was surprised that they wanted to enter this squad. Unlike other squads, the Demon Relief Squad focused on the people. They were always in the move to solve the demons' problems.

Shale also added, "In their missions, people are singing praises for their help."

"I see." The commander thought for a moment and said, "Tell Clara to put them in the zero squad."

"What? Zero squad?! Are you sure about it?"

"Yeah. That's the best squad for them to grow."

"I understand." Shale nodded. Since he had done all he could, the commander disappeared, returning to his room.

When he sat down, he couldn't help but remember the letter from the third prince. He grabbed it and read it again.

'Commander Oscar. There will be someone entering your Demon Banner Army right now. His name is Noel Ardagan, the son of Luke Ardagan. I want you to take care of him. I can assure you one thing, Noel Ardagan will surely be of help to the Demon Banner Army, so don't waste the precious resource I've given you.'

He didn't understand these words at first, but the Ancient Demon Tree and the Body Strengthening Liquid had proven his worth. He also managed to become a Spirit Wielder from the lowest point in less than a year.

In the future, he might grow even further.

"Luke Ardagan, huh... It's only a merchant family, but their financial power is the strongest in the kingdom. They even have a good public opinion due to the kind count. I guess the son is like the father. I'm pretty sure that he is planning to take back his territory... I guess I'll help him a bit in the future." Oscar smiled.

...

Meanwhile, Shale was questioned by them because Noel and Anna never knew about this zero squad.

"Sir Shale, what is this zero squad?"

"Do you know the structure of our Demon Banner Army?"

"Yes. The commander has fifteen direct subordinates, which are the captains of each squad. Then each captain usually has a thousand people each. The number might not be that big, but each of them is elite.

"And the captain usually have an even elites squads, comprising of less than one hundred people. They're special elite groups that handle all hard missions while the rest of the knights will handle the miscellaneous stuff. That's why the promotion to these elite squads are basically a competition for them."

"That's right." Shale nodded. "There are a total of ten elite squads in our army. Each of them has least than ten people, mostly formed in three groups of three like what you're supposed to have if there isn't an accident."

"But there is one more squad above those squads. This is the Zero Squad. Basically, all these people want to be the Zero Squad because this is where each captain will choose their successor to lead the army in the future."

"!!!" Noel and Anna widened their eyes in shock.

Shale smiled and continued, "That's right. The commander wants to give you two a chance. For Noel, it'll be a good chance for you to reclaim your position as a noble since the captain can recommend someone to be evaluated as a new noble and with the help of the commander, you shouldn't have any problem to become a noble."

"For Anna, it's a good basis of your reputation, especially since we're talking about the Demon Relief Squad. This is a powerful weapon for a noble, I'm sure you know what I mean."

Chapter 300 Kids

"..." Noel and Anna exchanged looks. They were surprised that the commander asked him to put them in this zero squad.

"Are you sure about us going there immediately?"

"It's fine. Septa came to the first squad right after the graduation. And you two have surpassed him, so it won't be too much for the commander to put you there. I'll just send the letter of recommendation and that's all." Shale nodded, assuring them there wouldn't be any problems.

"Well." Noel and Anna couldn't reject it either, considering this was a big opportunity for them.

"Alright. The matter of your placement is done, so let's move on to the next topic. I have to cover up your action, so..." Shale disappeared for a moment before coming back with a bunch of wooden swords. He gave it to Noel and said, "Carry these swords."

"Wo-woah?" Noel was startled for a second while Anna grabbed a few to help him.

"Wooden swords?" Noel was confused.

"You carry a trunk, so it's normal for it to be wooden swords. As for the reason... follow me." Shale waved his hand while walking back to the training ground.

Noel immediately dropped his jaw when he saw the kids dancing in the training ground.

"What are you doing? Are you forcing them to—" Noel wanted to complain to Shale, but Shale simply pointed at them and told him to be quiet.

Noel stopped and observed them a bit more.

Some of them held a wooden sword, some of them didn't. But considering the wooden swords in their hands were already run down, it was clear that those who didn't have a sword actually had broken their swords.

"Those kids came here a week ago, asking me to train them the basics. They're not planning to be a knight in this army anyway, so after seeing their determination... I just told them a bit of the basics. Septa is quite interested in those kids anyway." Shale shrugged, explaining the situation.

Noel fell silent, watching them. Although they weren't holding a sword, they kept dancing and dancing. Erica and Eric surprisingly danced as if they were fighting each other. Their hands waved to the head, neck, chest, arms, providing a fatal blow to an enemy.

Yet, even though each move was deadly, they looked beautiful. Some of their movements had also shrunk a little bit. Although it looked like waste movements, Noel could feel something different from it.

"This is... their swing is big, but..." Noel frowned.

Shale nodded in agreement. "Yes. Their movement, specifically their dance, allow them to create a combination move that allows them to either retreat or attack. The dance becomes unpredictable and it'll surely overwhelm their opponents. I have never thought that the kids can achieve something like this. They're too smart."

"It's rhythm." Anna gave the answer from the previous life. "They have a rhythm planted in their bodies. While dancing, they are remembering the rhythm of a song, which allows them to incorporate it in their movement."

'A strong and overwhelming song can give them a unique rhythm that gives them power. A mellow and soothing song can give them a rhythm that gives them precision. And so on..." This sword dance had been popularized in her previous life.

Eric and Erica led their group and became famous throughout the kingdom. There were many nobles that even gave them position as long as they joined their household, but at that time, Eric and Erica only had one answer.

"We cross this path for him. If we can't help him, then why do we have to use this power for someone else?"

The nobles were stunned and immediately tried to find the one who inspired them to convince them to give these kids. But Noel challenged them head-on, not afraid of their threats.

The Sword Dance Group and the Independent Woman Group were among the pillars that made Noel's territory thrive.

Anna closed her eyes, knowing how amazing Noel was. If in the past, he had the reach of the royal family, there was a chance that he could make not only his territory, but the entire kingdom to thrive. Unfortunately, there was that rebellion that shattered everything.

Anna swore in her heart that she would correct all mistakes from the past, including Noel.

Noel, on the other hand, just felt proud about them. It felt like he was looking at his younger brothers and sisters, who managed to achieve something big.

One of the wooden swords somehow fell to the ground, alarming them.

"!!!" The kids stopped and turned around, finding Noel carrying the wooden swords.

"Big Brother Noel!" Eric and Erica were the first to call his name as the rest had their eyes flashed. In that instant, they dropped whatever they were doing and swarmed Noel.

"Wa-wait." Noel was startled by their reaction, but Shale suddenly added to make them even more excited. "You know, your Big Brother Noel has heard about you training here. After knowing your swords are either damaged or broken. He brought a trunk to the city to make wooden swords for you to practice."

"You—" Noel wanted to complain to Shale but he realized Shale was actually doing this for him. This white lie could cover up the entire trunk incident and somehow moved the kids' hearts.

"Big Brother..." They were looking at Noel with admirations. Whatever they did, their Big Brother always helped them out.

"Then, I'll get this one!" Erica grabbed the sword that fell to the ground.

"Is that alright with you?"

"Yes. This is special. Unlike the others that are still in your arms, I get one different from the rest."

"Wait, what? If you think different means disrespect, you're wrong..." Noel wanted to take it back, so he could hand the swords properly, but the big smile on Erica's face stopped him. "Alright. You can get it."

Noel then handed the rest of the swords. Anna also helped it but the kids still looked at her with hostility, thinking Anna only did it to cause more misery to Noel.

"Well, you can talk for a while. I'm going to prepare for your graduation and recommendation letter."

Noel thanked Yale and sat down on the ground to listen to them and Erica somehow sat down on his laps, making the others jealous.

Since he dropped her sword earlier, he thought she deserved this much.

'I guess if I have a sister or brother, they'll be like this.' Noel thought while patting Erica's head, not seeing Erica's blissful expression.