

S vs Rebirth 381

Chapter 381 Layers Of Protection

"Yes. Your Father's younger brother... Your Uncle."

"What?" Noel frowned. "But I have been told that he—"

"Died in action, yes. But how much have you heard about him?" Dimitri asked. "Do you know him being a part of the Demon Banner Army? His squad? His position?"

"I only know of him being a part of the army, but that's all..." Noel looked down with a serious expression. He realized he hadn't paid too much attention to the details.

"There are a few reasons why you haven't heard about him. The first is the fact that he is a part of the Demon Beholder Army means you have to erase your identity. The same applies to the Demon Assassination Squad.

"You're not allowed to use your real identity anymore and get a nickname for yourself. I was known as Shadow and your uncle was called Watcher. We belong in the dark after all.

"Another reason is because of his weird behavior. No, I can't really classify it as weird behavior... Hmm, how do I say it..." Dimitri thought for a moment. "Just think of him as problematic. His conduct is still like that of a noble.

"He has manners and all the nobility stuff, but his head is kind of screwed. He is similar to your father, a schemer.

"However, your father's scheme works for a certain goal that minimizes the bad things while maximizing the end reward. Meanwhile, your uncle always tries to harm both sides. There is simply no win or lose in your uncle's plan, only both sides lose.

"I heard he once stabbed someone to death in exchange for him to do the same. Basically, he stabbed his own hands, legs, and body while the other party had to do the same thing. Because he was stronger, he survived.

"If I were to put it simply, he is insane. Well, if the young master thinks it's too much to call him that, I'll apologize."

"No need. Everyone is entitled to their opinion." Noel shook his head and looked down. "So, my uncle was someone like that..."

"Yes. Not many people knew about it, but the Royal Family was aware of it. And when you were born, he wanted to kill you by giving me a fake mission." Dimitri looked at him with a serious expression. "Your father faked your death and tricked me into thinking I had finished my job. When I reported it, everything was clear that your uncle was behind it."

"Unfortunately, it was too late. He had poisoned the previous commander and joined the Supreme Devil Organization."

"I believe this is the reason why you're sent to the Demon Banner Army alone. First, your uncle was once a part of the army and managed to survive on his own. Second, the Demon Banner Army should be able to protect you when your parents aren't there for you. Third, I have a personal connection with the army. So, I would be there for you if something went wrong."

Noel contemplated for a moment. He now understood the reasons why they sent him to the Demon Banner Army. However, he was still confused about why his parents had to fake their deaths.

"Still, I can't understand why my parents... No, wait. The Stargaze Family?"

Dimitri nodded. "I think you're already aware of it. Your Father and Marquis Stargaze are even closer than best friends."

"I believe he has made an agreement with the marquis to split up after hearing the Royal Family is connected to the Supreme Devil Organization."

"They don't know who it is, so the marquis had to support the current king while your father chose the king's brother, the Third Prince."

"I'm not very sure about this, but it's most likely that your parents are trying to hunt down your uncle. If they won and the Third Prince became the current king, they would use that influence to hunt him down openly.

"But because they lost, they faked their own deaths with the help of the marquis. In the dark, they would be able to act freely to hunt down the organization.

"Of course, I can't really praise this kind of action, considering they have left you alone. But I can kind of understand... Despite leaving you alone like this, they're giving you all kinds of support.

"For example, me. I have been following you for the past year. There is also the support of the Third Prince. Since he was indebted to your father, he tried to ask the commander to support you. Then, there is your mother's family...

"I don't know if you're aware of this, but if we trace back your ancestry, you can be considered a royal from our neighboring kingdom. It seems that your father is trying to use the connection of your mother's family to get the help of the royal family to help you. Though, I can say that Master and Madam are in love with each other, so don't worry, they conceive you not because they are forced, but because they want you.

"Just looking at the layers after layers of protection, I can see that your father has prepared everything before this."

Noel fell silent. He already knew about his ancestry and the connection to the Sword Saint and the royal family. It was surprising that despite leaving him alone like this, his father had been preparing a series of protections.

It seemed his father wanted him to get stronger during that time. As for the reasons... Noel looked at Dimitri. "I have several questions."

"Sure. I'll do my best to answer your questions."

Noel took a deep breath. "Are you aware of the real purpose of following me?"

"The real purpose? I'm here to protect you, Young Master."

"Protect me... From what?"

"Protect you from everything and deal with the mess you've left behind," Dimitri answered without hesitation.

However, Noel shook his head calmly as if he could see through a bit of his father's plan after learning all this information.

"There is actually another reason for you to follow me. It's true that my father wants you to protect me, but there is one threat that he truly wants you to stop. And that is..."

Chapter 382 Secret

"And that is... my uncle." Noel's expression darkened. "You are strong. And my uncle, a Devil Saint, is probably the biggest threat in my life.

"I mean, I was just born and he already wanted to kill me. Don't you think he will come for me when my parents can't protect me anymore?"

"Ah!" Dimitri looked down. What Noel said made sense. If it was him, repelling a Devil Saint wasn't a problem. In fact, he was probably the only one who could do it.

"Dimitri. Do you know the reason why my uncle wants to kill me?"

Dimitri scratched the back of his head. "I'm not very sure about it, but when I was on my mission to kill you, I heard your father saying something about the reaction to the family's heirloom as if you were the chosen one."

"!!!" Noel widened his eyes in shock and looked at Ardagan. He couldn't help but remember what the Sword Saint said back then.

"My spirit can create a real desire of a person from memory alone. And it's not limited to humans."

In that instant, Noel realized why Ardagan showed a connection to him. It had happened once when he was born.

In other words, his parents were already aware of him being Ardagan's host. No, he was probably the only one who would be accepted by Ardagan after using that oath.

'Why am I chosen by Ardagan?' Noel asked himself. 'I once asked Ardagan about this, but he didn't give me the answer. But more importantly, why did it matter to my uncle?'

No matter how hard he thought about it, he couldn't find the reason why his uncle wanted to kill him just because he was chosen by Ardagan.

"Still, what's the connection between my uncle and Ardagan?" Noel frowned.

"I believe it's because of your ancestor."

"My ancestor?"

"Yes." Dimitri nodded and pointed at Ardagan. "In history, there were only two people who wielded Ardagan. You are the second, but the first one was your ancestor. Your ancestor was known to be the strongest commander in history. He helped the royal family establish this kingdom.

"More importantly, the word 'strongest' couldn't be taken lightly. There are two strongest people whose strength is similar in the kingdom right now. They are the commander of the Demon Banner Army and the current Marshall. Both of them are powerful Spirit Transcendences. The realm above the Spirit Grandmaster.

"However, none of them can step on to the next stage, the highest realm recorded in history, the Spirit King!" He pointed at him. "But, Young Master, there was once a person who ascended to that throne."

"!!!" Noel gasped. "My ancestor..."

"Yes. Your Ancestor was a Spirit King. And that's probably the reason why you're targeted... Ardagan has finally chosen its owner and that's you... In other words, you have the potential to become a Spirit King.

"If we take a look at the fact your uncle is a member of the Supreme Devil Organization, I think it's pretty easy to learn why he tried to kill you..."

"If I were to become a Spirit King, the Supreme Devil Organization wouldn't be able to do anything." Noel nodded in understanding. "So, he wanted to cut me down before I could grow."

"Yes. And looking at how fast you progressed, it seemed that possibility was there."

"..." Noel took a deep breath. It was a bit hard for him to swallow all the information. But he noticed one thing off. "Wait a minute. The reason why the Royal Family executed my parents..."

"In fact, the Royal Family wanted to completely kill the Ardagan, including you. We have to thank the marquis who played his role perfectly."

"No, I'm not talking about the marquis. I'm talking about Anna!"

"Ah!" Dimitri shook his head. "To be honest, no matter how talented she was, the royal family wouldn't care too much about her opinion, especially when the marquis had been putting her marriage on hold.

"So, the fact that she became the most vocal person in that incident was probably... the scheme of the Royal Family."

"What do you mean by their scheme?"

"You don't know about it, Young Master?" Dimitri furrowed his eyebrows and shook his head. "I believe you should talk about it with Master. It's not my position to say it. Sorry, I can't answer this question."

"..." Noel frowned. "Fine. I want to ask two last questions. Why do my parents chase my uncle desperately? And why does the royal family not seize our properties and instead take care of them?"

"I'm not sure about it as well. It seems to be related to the secret of the family. That's the answer to both questions. I mean, the reasons why your parents were 'executed' were pretty clear. That was because of your uncle. There was no way they would forget someone like him and your parents had to be taken accountable as well.

"And both your uncle and the royal family seem to want the secret of your family that has been hidden somewhere. They couldn't find it no matter how hard they searched for it.

"The marquis took advantage of this to make the Royal Family exile you instead of killing you right away. He made them believe that you would lead them to the secret of the family.

"Hence, they hadn't done anything until this point because they wanted you to get stronger and get the secret. After that, they would try to seize it from you.

"If there is one person who will know about the secret of the family after your father, it'll be you."

Noel thought for a moment. "Still, we have declined to the point we're only a Count. So, what kind of secret do those people want... No, wait. We've been talking about our ancestry. Don't tell me..."

"I think Young Master has found the reason." Dimitri smiled. "Yes. I'm assuming that the secret they're trying to get is none other than the way to become a Spirit King."

Chapter 383 Reward

Noel had been discussing the problem of the Ardagan Family. He never thought that the problem was to this extent.

His uncle alone was enough to prosecute the Ardagan Family. The Royal Family had enough reasons to suspect them.

However, they couldn't do it openly for three reasons. First, they needed the secret as well. With that secret, their strongest expert could become a Spirit King and suppress all influences in their territory.

Secondly, the Ardagan Family was the wealthiest family in the kingdom, so fighting them would pose a massive threat to them since no one could tell what Luke Ardagan would use his money for.

Last but not least, it was Luke himself. As the head of the Ardagan Family, Luke was known to be a smart and brilliant guy, whose deeds resounded across the kingdom. His good deeds gave a lot of support from the civilians, making it hard for them to make their move.

If not for the fact they supported the Third Prince, had a family member who defected to the Supreme Devil Organization, and allowed the Royal Family to act, they wouldn't fall.

In other words, the reason why the Ardagan Family fell was because they desired it, not because they were ruined by others.

Noel never thought his family was this strong. Even though it didn't look like it, his father had built the family's reputation to its peak.

There was no way he wouldn't be astonished to know everything about his family. In fact, the desire to rebuild the family became even stronger in his heart.

While they were walking toward a nearby city, Noel kept asking about all the family matters as Noel planned to learn everything from Dimitri. Of course, as someone who had been working under Luke and the Demon Banner Army, Dimitri was adept in all kinds of topics, from politics to family businesses.

Eventually, they reached the town and Noel could finally get some rest and have his wound fully treated.

Of course, due to the fact he had died, he had to wear a mask.

They went to the inn. Since Noel was injured, Dimitri chose to leave to get some medicine. "Then, I'll be back as soon as possible."

"Yes." Noel nodded with a serious expression. After Dimitri was gone, Noel immediately checked his system since he had done a lot of things.

[Mission: Help Rose's Revenge.]

[Description: Kill the Blood Berserker with whatever means.]

[Reward: ???]

[Mission: Save the Zero Squad]

[Description: The Zero Squad is going to be wiped out. Please save them.]

[Reward: Rune Mastery +1 Level, Rune Enchantment System, Hardening Rune, Softening Rune, Energy Gathering Rune.]

[Penalty: You, Anna, and all the members of the Zero Squad die.]

[Mission: Save the Silica Valley]

[Description: The Supreme Devil Organization is going to attack the Valley. Stop them.]

[Reward: Water Lord's Favor, Freezing Crystal +1 Level, Ice Infusion +1 Level.]

Noel couldn't help but smile after seeing these three missions. He had finished all of them.

'This is good. Although Dimitri helped me kill the Blood Berserker, it still counted as me helping Rose's revenge. Then, I also managed to avoid the worst-case scenario where the Zero Squad was wiped out. Last but not least, the Supreme Devil Organization has been defeated thoroughly...' Noel smiled, feeling relieved that he could finish these three missions.

Of course, he was slightly disappointed since he couldn't finish one more mission.

'I can't help the Water Lord, but it's alright for now. I have time to get the Water Lord's favor... Considering I'm planning to rebuild the family, his opinion as one of the elders of the Tower Association will help me a lot.

'And it seems that I can't get my Affection Medal yet... Well, it's a double-edged sword, so I'll prepare myself for the time being.

'Of course, let's take a look at the reward right now.' Noel frowned when he looked at Rose's mission. 'The reward is still unknown, but how can I even accept it? Ardagan?'

[You have accepted it automatically. But because it's unknown, you have to meet Rose first before knowing your reward.]

'Well, this is Rose's revenge, so I kind of understand the reason. But is there no reward coming from you?'

[It'll be revealed after you meet her again.]

'Tsk. The reward is on hold, huh. It seems I haven't understood you completely.' Noel sighed and took a look at the second mission.

'Rune Mastery +1 Level, Rune Enchantment System, Hardening Rune, Softening Rune, and Energy Gathering Rune. Although the runes themselves are stored in my mind, it's pretty hard to learn them from scratch.

'So, getting these three runes makes it easier for me to master them. And the Rune Enchantment System is like a blessing to me since I can use runes to affect an object. Even the Rune Mastery level has increased by one. This is a big reward for me since I can finally utilize my runes freely now that I'm using my second identity.

'As for the last mission... The Water Lord's favor can wait until I rebuild my family. The Freezing Crystal is a powerful ability. Although I'll use my Fire Ability as ladre, I don't mind utilizing all of my abilities in terms of emergency. It applies to the Ice Infusion.

'That's all for the missions, I guess. Then, let's think about what I'm planning to do with Dimitri here. Of course, I'm going to get stronger, but I have to go to the Demon Relief Squad again after a month or so as ladre.

'And from the looks of it, Rose will be informing them about my death and the rumor will spread. I feel bad fooling them like this, but I can't afford to reveal everything. Well, I'll just talk to them after going as ladre. They'll realize it sooner or later anyway. For now, I'll just let the rumor reach the Royal Family's ears.

'As for my training, I have to improve my Fire Ability... Well, Dimitri has been chosen by my father, so I guess I can trust him. Alright. Let Dimitri decide my training schedule after he learns about my two elements. It's not like I'm telling him about my system or Ardagan.'

Noel had decided his plan for the next month.

Chapter 384 Training Preparation

"We have gone far enough from the city, Young Master. I want to ask you what kind of secret are you planning to show me?" Dimitri asked.

"I think you already know about it if you have been observing me." Noel raised both hands. His right hand released fire while his left hand formed a snowflake.

"I see. So, you're talking about your two elements." Dimitri nodded in understanding. "To be honest, this is not unprecedented. There was one person who had this record as well... It was three hundred years ago.

"There was a shaman with peculiar yet beautiful pupils. Her pupils had different colors: red and green. The shaman from the Tuzsk Kingdom had twin spirits... Fire and Wood Spirits.

"Other than that... I don't think anyone had two Spirits in their life." Dimitri explained. "So yeah, Young Master is the second."

'I'm the third since my Ancestor was the first one.' Noel added before saying, "Yeah. This is what I want to tell you. Even though I have two elements, I would like to seal my Ice Element for the time being."

"That's a good idea. You have only shown one element as Noel and another element as ladre. Since people think one spirit per person is the norm, they won't know it's you. Even if they somehow know, they need to check it twice to confirm it. But since you're planning to hide it, are you going to abandon it completely?"

"No." Noel shook his head. "I'm planning to boost the Spirit's Ability."

"!!!" Dimitri pinched the bridge of his nose. "So, Young Master has heard about Spirit Growth?"

"Yes."

"That's good." Dimitri thought for a moment. "In that case, I have to prepare your fire element..."

"There is one more thing I'd like to show you." Noel walked to a head-sized rock and poured the Spiritual Energy into his sword before carving a symbol on the rock.

"This is..." Dimitri gasped. "Enchantment?! Spirit Enchantment. But there is something different from this Enchantment..."

Noel finished the carving after thirty minutes since there were a lot of details to make and this was the first time he did it. Still, he was satisfied with the result as he said, "Try hitting it."

Dimitri nodded and struck the rock with his fist. Surprisingly, he only cracked the rock.

"Huh?" Dimitri widened his eyes in shock. "That punch earlier should have destroyed a low level Enchantment. Young Master, you..."

Noel smiled. "What you call Enchantment is actually an incomplete rune."

"Incomplete rune..." Dimitri looked down, falling into deep thought. "Now that I think about it, the Spirit Enchantment Book is in the Greenwood Kingdom. Your ancestry... Ah! Is this rune related to the ancestor?"

"Yes." Noel nodded.

"But who had that record? I didn't remember you having a book..." Dimitri glanced at the sword. "It was said that Ardagan was alive. That was why he chose his owner... If Ardagan was more mysterious than I originally thought, then I could understand why you knew about this..."

Noel nodded. "Yes. And I'm planning to hone my Rune Skill. In other words, I want to learn swordsmanship, the Fire Element, the Rune Mastery, and everything about Spiritual Energy, including the Spirit Technique. Can you make the schedule for me?"

"I see. I also have to teach you some basic survival as well. At the very least, you have to be in a situation where you have to survive so that you won't have any problem doing it when I can't protect you."

Dimitri was calculating the time and said, "If that's the case, you could train your Rune Ability in the morning, the Fire Element after lunch, and the swordsmanship during the dark. You also have the blessing, so you won't have any problem doing everything during the night unless you're in a cave without any moonlight.

"I'll teach you some survival techniques and anything about Spiritual Energy in between them."

Noel nodded. "I'll do my best following your training. Just ignore all my complaints."

"Understood. Though, I have to warn you that my training won't be easy."

Noel smiled. "I'm looking forward to it."

He got another surprise from Ardagan after confirming the training.

[Mission: Gain Dimitri's Approval.]

[Description: During your training, you have to receive Dimitri's Approval in five categories: Sword, Fire, Rune, Survival, and Spiritual Energy.]

[Reward: Depending on the number of approvals.]

[Maximum Reward: System Shop Upgrade.]

[Penalty: -]

Noel was shocked to see the reward. He hardly looked at the Shop because it didn't sell anything new for a while. But if it was going to be upgraded, then he would get a lot of new things.

At the same time, Noel realized something about the system. There was a part that he hadn't explored yet.

'Now that I think about it, the daily mission hasn't been updated for a while. The Career contains all my abilities, so I can't say much about it. As for the Medal... Now that I think about it, what if the medal section is upgraded? What will I get? Can I use a second medal? Imagine, if I can get two medals with 25% additional Spiritual Energy, my Spiritual Energy will increase by half even though my Spiritual Energy capacity is twice a normal person due to hosting two spirits. Is it like what I think, Ardagan?'

[It is a possibility. However, I'll still have to consider the amount of your Spiritual Energy reserve so that you won't get easily tired because of the lack of Spiritual Energy.]

[I don't think I need to remind you, but I'll still say it. Even though your Spiritual Energy Reserve is twice that of a normal person, your body has two elements, Rune Ability and even the medals. So, you still need to be careful.]

'I know. I'll leave it to you, Ardagan. Just tell me if you need anything... At the very least, I want to kill that Fire Bird Demon to get its heart so that you can get stronger.'

[Thank you for the thought. But you have to get stronger first.]

'Haha, of course.' Noel smiled, looking at Dimitri. 'I have someone to teach me right now.'

Chapter 385 News

While Noel was receiving his training from Dimitri, the rest of the Demon Relief Squad had just received heavy news from Rose.

"What did you say?!" Stella widened her eyes in shock. She couldn't believe what she had just heard.
"Noel died?"

Paul frowned as he asked to confirm it. "Are you sure Anna killed Noel?"

Rose nodded while gritting her teeth. Her expression was filled with anguish and anger. If Anna had been here, she would have torn her into pieces.

Obviously, Clara had told them about the end of the Blood Berserker. She couldn't help but remember what Noel said about fulfilling her revenge.

"I'll fulfill your revenge even if it costs me my life."

Noel's voice echoed in her ears, making her regret even more. She thought she had told him enough that Noel wouldn't do it, but it turned out she had to put on a leash on him to ensure Noel didn't do it.

Unfortunately, it was too late. Rose bit her lips. "Yes. I personally saw it. Anna stabbed Noel with her sword and pushed him off the cliff."

Jonathan, who had been Noel's mentor in Spiritual Energy Control, had some special attachments to Noel. He considered everything properly and muttered, "In the normal condition, Noel wouldn't have a hard time landing on the bottom of the cliff. But if his body is stabbed by a sword, it's a different matter."

"Where is Noel's corpse?" Clara asked.

"I'm sorry, Captain. After fleeing from those demons, I hurriedly checked the site. However, I could only see blood splattered in the area and ripped clothes." Rose shook her head.

"What? His body has been eaten by the demons?" Stella roared while unsheathing her sword.

"What do you think you're doing, Stella?" Clara glared at her.

However, the rage in Stella's heart overwhelmed her feelings toward Clara. She simply stated while emitting killing intent. "I'm going to hunt her down and make her pay!"

"Stop it. This is my order as your Captain!"

"Captain. Can't you even see what's going on here?" Stella bit her lips, standing in front of Clara as if she wanted to challenge her.

"I haven't bonded too much with him, so I don't have any special attachment to him. However, I can't deny the fact that a squad member has died. That's why you are going to stop here and I shall report this to the commander... personally!" Clara glared back.

As she said, she had never worked together with Noel, so she didn't have any attachment to him. That was why her opinion was colder than the rest since she also had to consider the Demon Relief Squad as a whole.

Besides, there was something in her mind that also caught her attention. Though, she didn't say it to the rest of the group due to the lack of proof.

Knock!

Knock!

Clara and the rest turned around, wondering who was coming to their room. However, the Water Lord's voice soon echoed through the door.

"I'm sorry, but I overheard your conversation. May I come in?"

Jonathan glanced at Clara, asking for her opinion. As soon as she gave the nod, Jonathan used his Telekinesis to open the door.

The Water Lord also had a troubled expression on his face, considering Noel had made a huge impact on his plan and him personally. Hence, it was a shame to know the person who piqued his interest died just like this.

"Is it true that Noel Ardagan has died?" The Water Lord entered while asking. He didn't get the answer, but their expressions confirmed it. "I see..."

The Water Lord paused for a moment before explaining, "The entire plan could work because of him. That was why I was planning to reward him more than anyone else here. However, I didn't expect him to die like this.

"Still, it doesn't change the fact that he has saved this place. Not only could I get rid of all the demons, but I also managed to eradicate the Supreme Devil Organization in my territory. I owed him.

"Although his noble family had fallen and his name wouldn't be remembered, I shall give him the status of "Hero of the Silica Valley" to honor him." The Water Lord sighed. "If there's a chance to prosecute Anna Stargaze for his death, you could contact me. I will do my best to help you."

The Water Lord gave him the status so that his name would still be remembered by the people. This was the least he could do for Noel.

Though, he doubted anyone would try to prosecute Anna or the Stargaze Family upon his death. After all, Noel's status wasn't as high as his father's former status.

Clara nodded her head. "I'm grateful that you do something like this, Water Lord."

"No, it's something I should do." The Water Lord waved his hand as if telling her it wasn't a big deal.
"What are you planning to do, Captain of the Demon Relief Squad?"

"It's not something that the Water Lord has to be concerned about. We will simply continue our work, including fixing your land a little bit."

"Well, if that's what you like. I've said everything I wanted to say, so I'll take my leave here." The Water Lord politely nodded to them before leaving the room.

Clara pinched the bridge of her nose and said, "Anyway, you all are to continue your work here for the land restoration. Meanwhile, I'll go back to the headquarters to discuss this matter with the commander."

"I think I have to remind you once again, especially Stella and Rose. I know that you are trying to avenge him, but I forbid you from doing it. This is an order. The matter between the Stargaze Family and the Ardagan Family is a complicated matter, so I have to consult with the commander first."

"Paul and Jonathan too... You are forbidden to do anything about this matter. Ben and Zion will keep an eye on them, understood?"

Clara gave them a cold gaze as if she didn't take 'no' for an answer.

Chapter 386 Return

While the Demon Relief Squad was mourning, Anna rushed back to her territory.

She was standing in front of a middle-aged man who was busy signing a few documents on his table.

She politely bowed to him and said, "I have returned, Father."

"En." He only nodded his head.

There were no words exchanged between them. The awkward silence filled the room, but Anna didn't do anything after all this.

After a few minutes, he glanced at her and finally pushed away the documents for a moment. "You're not throwing a tantrum? It seems that you've grown up a bit."

"I apologize for making you worried, Father." Anna was observing her father because she was curious about how much her father knew regarding Luke's plan. However, she didn't plan to break the news for now, considering she didn't know how many ears were in this mansion. Even her father might have turned his back on Luke, so she had to confirm it first.

"So, what have you done in the Demon Banner Army? I heard you were pretty amazing there to the point you snatched the record of being the greatest Apprentice Knight, surpassing that of Septa." Her father, Kevin Stargaze, let out a small smile as if he was proud of her achievement.

"Yes. I managed to do that. More importantly, I managed to get rid of the potential threat of our Stargaze Family."

"Hoh? What do you mean by that?"

"I have killed Noel Ardagan!" Anna stated with a cold tone.

"..." Kevin seemed to maintain his poker face, but Anna's perception was different from the past. She noticed the slight change in his father's gaze as if he was disturbed by that fact.

"I see. So, you killed him. In that case, I should get prepared for the commander's interference." Kevin thought for a moment. "Still, I don't understand one thing. Why did it take so long to kill him? If it were the usual you, you should have killed him from the very start. You even dismissed the guard I sent to protect you."

Anna had prepared this answer with Noel, so she answered with confidence. "I believe one year is the perfect time to both observe him and avoid the Royal Family's attention."

"Observe him and the royal family... Why?"

"Although I had suggested executing him along with his parents, that was the first time I saw him. So, I couldn't help but get curious to see what kind of man would pose a threat to our family.

"Even I had heard about Count Ardagan's prestige. But he was different, so I wanted to see whether he would become a threat or not. After seeing his progress, I believed he had to die. Hence, the decision.

"And if I killed him right away, it would harm the reputation of the Royal Family. Although it looked like I had just finished what they should have done, it could also be interpreted as me being above the royal family since I corrected her punishment on Noel from exile to death.

"Father might do something about it, but I didn't plan to harm the family. That was why my decision was like this. I hope I have satisfied you, Father."

Kevin paused as if he was contemplating her action.

"Well, that's enough for now. I thought you had become his best friend and chose to protect him instead of killing him." Kevin chuckled as if treating Noel's life like nothing. "There was no feeling between you and him?"

"I did indeed feel he was different from a typical noble. If our path never reached this point, I believed he would be a great ally to me. In fact, if we were born into a different family, I wouldn't mind marrying him because it would benefit the family. I had seen his achievement, which was similar to the prestige of Count Ardagan in the past, albeit on a smaller scale.

"Unfortunately, the moment the execution was done, there was no turning back. Hence, the only option was to kill him."

"I see. That was an interesting opinion. From the looks of it, he seemed to be more capable than any noble sons or even the princes." Kevin rose from his seat and walked to the cabinet in the corner of the room. He took out a necklace from the cabinet and handed it to her.

The chains were made of gold and the circular pendant had a bright red gem attached to it.

"This is called Red Sapphire Necklace. It was said that the original color was blue, but because it had been worn from generation to generation, the pendant had been covered with blood and turned red over time.

"However, this necklace has been imbued by enchantment. You should wear this because this pendant might save your life one day. It'll only be activated when one approaches death, so you have to wear it all the time."

Anna was confused and excited at the same time. She was looking at the necklace on her hand while thinking, 'What is this necklace? This is the first time I have seen it... There are a lot of things going on within the necklace, but I couldn't see its depth. Three, no, there are four runes embedded into this necklace. How does my father possess something like this?

'And I never received this pendant in my last life. Does that mean my father sees something in me that I don't realize? This is weird, but since I get a necklace like this, I don't mind taking it.'

Looking at her confused expression, Kevin explained. "It seems that you don't know the reason why I give this to you... Well, it's simple. In the past, you have never taken any interest in the family's matters. Everything you've done has the potential to harm the family.

"That's why I don't wish this important necklace to be stolen. But after seeing you now, I'm assured. A spirit wielder, a powerful but unknown blade, and experience... All these changes have made me think of you in another light. That's why you're worthy of this necklace. Take care of it."

"Yes, Father."

Chapter 387 Kevin

"Then, I'll take my leave." Anna bowed her head and stepped out of the room politely. She couldn't help but look at the necklace in her hand. 'Something is different in this life. It seems that I was too much of a mess in my past life... To think it would take me my entire life to even figure that out.'

She had planned a few things when she came back here, including meeting her teacher.

'Noel is doing his best there, so I'm not going to lose here.' Anna smiled while walking to her room. At the very least, she was going to rest for today since she would have a lot of things to do.

However, she couldn't help but recall the change of expression her father had when she mentioned Noel. It seemed her father also knew about him.

'As expected, the letter is right. There is a connection between my father and Noel's family. He should have some plans regarding the Ardagan Family. Though, I can't really tell him everything I know because I don't know who I can trust right now. My father might even do something out of my imagination if I tell him like this. I'm not Noel, so I should keep this information to myself until I'm sure about it.

'Now that I think about it, I should use this chance to increase not only my strength but my experience so that I can understand Noel's plan better. That way, I might even be able to work together with Noel before he tells me his plan.

'Yeah. This is what I should do.' Anna smiled while pumping her fists.

While Anna walked to her room, her father, Kevin, pinched the bridge of his nose.

"My daughter has killed my best friend's son?" Kevin's expression darkened. "No, no, no. There is no way she has done it. After all, Luke told me that Noel was protected by someone. There was no way he would die.

"So, the problem is... Did he plan his entire death? And is my daughter in it right now? If she is, then doesn't that mean there's a relationship between them?

"Did Noel manage to solve the hatred between them? After all, my daughter should be the focus of the entire execution. What happened to them?"

Kevin tried to figure out what happened from all the information he had but to no avail.

His subordinate had been trying to tail them, but because Shale once spotted him, he had to move a bit further away. Hence, he couldn't capture everything that truly happened between them.

That was why he lacked information about what transpired between Noel and Anna.

"This is confusing. I don't know if my daughter has changed or not... Well, she has changed, but I don't know if she still retains some of her past nature.

"Well, I haven't asked for what she is coming back. But at least I have more chances to observe her now. Maybe in the future, she will truly change like how Luke predicted.

"Still, I have given the necklace that Luke gave me in the past. He told me to give it to my daughter if she had the potential to work together with Noel...

"Although he never said it, Noel was supposed to be the key to solving the Supreme Devil Organization that seems to be plaguing this kingdom.

"So, I should assume that Noel hasn't died. Then, I should continue my plan." Kevin took a deep breath before he felt someone rushing into his room. "Who?"

Bam!

Suddenly, someone slammed the door, rushing into the room.

"This is bad, Sir." A butler entered. Due to rushing here, he was panting and had a hard time catching his breath. His right hand was presenting an important letter that contained the royal seal.

"Hmm?" Kevin narrowed his eyes, looking at the seal. "This is a royal seal? Is there anyone from the royal family visiting us? No, wait. There might be someone..."

Without hesitation, he took the letter and waved his hand, dismissing the butler.

As he expected, the moment he took out the letter, it came from the person he had thought of earlier.

"I have heard that my disciple has returned to the capital city. I'll be visiting her as soon as possible."

Josephine Brown.

In an instant, Kevin's expression became cold when he saw the name.

"She's coming again? That witch sent by the royal family..." Kevin clicked his tongue. It all started with the betrayal of Noel's uncle, Laufey Ardagan.

Because of what happened, the royal family put a close eye on Luke and his connections, including him.

And when they found out about Anna's talent, they tried to control her. Though, it also became his ticket to get close to the royal family.

In exchange, the royal family sent an observer to ensure Luke and Kevin wouldn't pose any threat to them.

With Josephine becoming Anna's teacher, the brainwashing began.

Even though he had been sneakily helping Anna, he couldn't remove her influence completely.

That was why he never disagreed when Anna wanted to go to the Demon Banner Army. At the very least, she would be away from Josephine's influence.

Now that she had come back, he was afraid that Anna would return to the way she was.

'What should I do now?' Kevin bit his lips, trying to figure out what he should do to prevent Anne from returning to her past self.

"As soon as possible... Even if this letter is brought by a special carrier, she has to travel for another one or two days before reaching here. I should prepare some countermeasures before then."

Without hesitation, Kevin began formulating his plan on the spot, pushing all the matters on hand away. Anna had changed for the better, so there was no way he would let Josephine change her back.

Unbeknownst to him, Anna wasn't a simple sixteen years old girl. He didn't know she had reincarnated. Her willpower wasn't as weak as he thought it would be.

Chapter 388 Josephine

"Father. I'm here." Anna knocked on her father's door with a serious expression, not knowing why her father suddenly called her here.

"Come in."

As soon as Anna entered, she saw her father's concerned expression as if something bad had happened.

"Is there anything I can help you with, Father?" Anna asked with a calm expression like she never noticed his concern.

"I want to ask you about something. What do you think about your teacher?"

"Are you talking about Teacher Josephine? Or is it Sir Shale?"

"The former."

Anna looked down for a moment as her expression became cold. On the one hand, she wanted to kill the teacher that killed her in the past. On the other hand, she couldn't do it right now for two reasons: she wasn't strong enough and she hadn't prepared for the consequences of killing her.

The royal family would attack them as soon as Anna tried to harm them. And she had to act as if she was still following her teacher's words for the time being.

Hence, Anna explained, "I'm indebted to Teacher Josephine for teaching me many things. Without her, I wouldn't be able to reach this level."

Kevin frowned when he heard her answer. However, that expression soon disappeared as he calmly said, "I see. If that's the case, I'm here to inform you that your teacher will be visiting soon. So, you have to greet her later."

"!!!" Anna was surprised to know her teacher was coming. Although she had expected this, she thought the teacher would be coming far later. She would have a lot of time to prepare for it.

However, it seemed the situation wasn't going according to her expectations.

'It seems that I have to adjust my plan for a bit.' Anna muttered inwardly before politely bowing to her father. "If that's the case, I shall prepare for her visit."

"Yes." Kevin hesitated for a moment before saying, "However, if you think you want to practice by yourself, I can tell your teacher about it."

Anna was surprised once again. Although he worded it that way, Anna knew if she wanted to reject her visit, her father wouldn't hesitate to not accept Josephine from entering the territory.

However, Anna had to face this Josephine sooner or later. Since the opportunity had arrived, she chose to face her teacher head-on.

Anna smiled. "Thank you, Father. But that won't be necessary. It's been so long since the last time I met her."

"Is that so?" Kevin made an awkward face before agreeing to her. "Since you want it that way, then I'll inform you when she's arrived in our territory."

"Yes. Thank you, Father. I'll be—" Anna stopped when she felt a fluctuation of Spiritual Energy from the outside.

Even Kevin turned around, furrowing his eyebrows.

If the Demon Banner Army had their captains and the Tower Association had their elders, the nobles had their Arbiters.

And from the fluctuation just now, they knew that one of the Arbiters had arrived. Third Arbiter, the Royal ian, Josephine Brown.

Kevin gritted his teeth. He had told his people to inform him before she reached this place, so there was no way they wouldn't do it. Hence, the only reason why he never heard a single thing from them was because Josephine had traveled faster than them.

"It seems that your teacher has arrived."

"Then, I'll be greeting her." Anna politely nodded while maintaining her calm face.

But when she left the room, her expression turned cold. 'Now, I wonder how much influence is left in this body... Although I have reincarnated and my soul is strong, the body is still my previous body. So, it should be reacting to her words. And I have to measure it so that I can adjust my plan accordingly.'

With that thought in mind, Anna came out of the mansion, looking at the gate. Despite releasing that amount of Spiritual Energy, it seemed she didn't enter the marquis' mansion without permission.

In fact, she was waiting without saying anything as if she knew someone would come for her.

And as she predicted, Anna had come out.

"..." Anna took a deep breath. Just looking at her appearance could make her shiver. It seemed that she would still have some problems getting rid of her influence.

She looked at this red-haired woman with an emotionless face. Despite her short notice, Josephine was wearing a plain white shirt and black pants coupled with long black robes that signified her identity as a ian.

These were her usual clothes every time she met the king, so it was polite enough to visit a marquis.

As soon as their gazes intertwined, Anna politely bowed to her and greeted her. "It's been a while, Teacher Jose."

"Indeed," Jose smirked, wondering how much Anna had changed because she joined the Demon Banner Army.

Of course, Anna was sensitive enough to know what she wanted. Without hesitation, she released her killing intent and shouted coldly, "Open the gate! You commoners are too blind to not even recognize the great arbiter! Do you want to die?!"

If Noel was here, he would be shocked because Anna was always polite to others despite their different status. Though, if he never knew Anna and saw this behavior, there would be nothing to stop him from killing Anna.

Meanwhile, the soldiers panicked because they had heard a lot of rumors about Anna from the other guards or staff in the mansion.

They hurriedly followed her instructions as if their lives depended on it.

As soon as the gate was opened, Jose entered the mansion while smiling. She stood in front of Anna and said, "It seems you have returned from the Demon Banner Army. So, did they kick you out?"

"No, Teacher. I went there simply to fulfill your teaching. You once told me that commoners and nobles are different and that their lives are in our hands.

"So, I went there to torture Noel Ardagan before killing him. He had even contributed a big time to the point it would become a problem even for me. If only Teacher could see his despair right before he died." She smiled evilly.

"Good, that's my student."

Chapter 389 Matter

"Good, that's my student."

The guards who stopped her earlier were in complete shock. They had heard about Anna's rampant behavior. She didn't care about other people's lives.

They thought she was just a typical noble miss, but there was a huge difference between Anna and her father, Kevin.

Despite having a powerful strength and influence, Kevin still treated his employees well. On the other hand, there were already a few people who had died because they made a mistake in front of Anna.

Now that they had seen what truly had happened, they realized Anna had become this way because of her teacher.

She was the one teaching Anna of her current mindset. They couldn't help but wonder if the marquis had tried to do something for Anna since they weren't at the level where they were aware of the conspiracy between the marquis and the royal family.

Still, their job was to remain silent since they would die if they spoke anything wrong.

They didn't know Anna was different from the past. She had to do this just to fool her teacher.

Though, Anna also had her fair share of surprises.

While bowing her head to greet her, Anna felt her body become heavy. It took a lot from her just acting like this. At the same time, she could say all this as if it was her second nature.

The nature that had been ingrained by her teacher.

'As expected, even with my past memory and stronger willpower, it's still not enough to erase the nature that has been ingrained in my body. My body feels like shaking and becomes weak just from seeing her alone.

'Well, both in my previous life and this life, I still remember her teaching and can understand why the body is reacting.

'If that's the case, I should keep her with me for the time being so that I can get used to this pressure. After my body has grown accustomed, I will completely break free from her brainwashing. And that's where I will get my revenge.'

Anna couldn't help but remember the time when her teacher stabbed her in the back. She couldn't forgive her teacher, but at the same time, she had learned the reason from Noel.

Though, it was still something that a teacher should do to her own student.

Coupled with the fact that she had been brainwashing her from childhood, Anna planned to get the best revenge in the near future. But for now, she still needed her to be a guarantee if she wanted to investigate the royal family.

Anna paused for a moment before asking, "May I know the purpose of your visit this time, Teacher?"

Jose glanced at Anna and said, "Follow me to meet your father."

"Understood." Anna nodded without hesitation, following her. She thought, 'This has never happened before. In the past, because of my aptitude, I was training around this time. Though, I have now become a Spirit Wielder, so of course, I can understand there is a change. Whether it's a good change or not...'

Anna didn't continue her thought. However, she would make sure she could meet Noel every three months as promised.

Because she had been teaching Anna, she was already aware of the layout of the house. So, it didn't take long for her to arrive in Kevin's office.

Both of them looked at each other without leaving any sound. It felt like they were trying to challenge each other.

Of course, her father wasn't afraid of her, considering her father was also one of the Arbiters. However, the royal family made him an Arbiter just to give him enough benefits to stay on their side while they maintained the surveillance due to the friendship he had with Luke.

If her father and her teacher fought, Anna couldn't predict who would win.

"So, for what reason do you come here with such short notice? You even rushed to this place..." Kevin asked with a slightly annoyed tone.

"Aren't you the one who is so slow? You couldn't even greet me at the gate."

"This is my territory. With such short notice, I can claim that you're invading my territory. Do you really want to fight me?" Kevin narrowed his eyes.

"I don't mind, but... that's not what I come for." Jose glanced at Anna before pointing at her. "The Crown Prince has taken an interest in your daughter. Present your daughter to the King right away!"

In that instant, Kevin's expression became extremely cold. "Hoh? I have set the limit beforehand, and all of us have agreed on that. So, are they going to break the agreement we made at that time?"

"If Anna hasn't shown such explosive growth, that would be the case. However, it's a different case when she becomes a Spirit Wielder at the age of 16. With her strength and the royal family's influence, the kingdom will flourish. This is a win-win situation."

"I don't see any winning here, especially when they're planning to break the agreement." Kevin gritted his teeth, growing even more irritated.

"I'm simply giving you their message."

Surprisingly, the one who stopped the conversation was not Kevin but Anna.

Her tone was filled with annoyance as she grumbled. "No one is qualified to marry me. Even if the God is the one trying to match me with someone else, I won't follow it."

"..." Josephine narrowed her eyes. "This is not a place for you to butt in."

Anna smirked coldly before releasing her killing intent. "Teacher, you're the one who taught me, right? I'm different from anyone else. They should be grateful when I kill them. That's why someone as special as me doesn't belong to royalty. Unless he can unite the four kingdoms, he is not qualified to be my husband!"

"You..." Josephine widened her eyes, never expecting Anna to talk back like this. She thought she had completely ingrained her teaching in her body and mind, but it seemed that the training in the Demon Banner Army had changed her a bit.

"I have told you that this is not your place to butt in. If you don't marry the Crown Prince, you only have one route."

"Are you insane?" Kevin slammed the table while gnashing his teeth. "You're going to make my daughter an inquisitor?"

Chapter 390 Inquisitor

"You're going to make my daughter an inquisitor?"

Anna recognized what this meant. Even though they called it an inquisitor, it was actually an even worse place.

'An inquisitor is similar to a mercenary group, but it is an organization built by the royal family itself.

'The people in the organization came from varied backgrounds, including criminals as long as they are good at fighting.

'The organization works in order to fulfill the request of the nobles and the royal family. It is basically the place to train an Arbiter.

'My Father once came from this place and became strong enough to the point he married into the marquis family.

'It is rumored that this place doesn't look at your status, only your skills. They can use anything if they want to go up, including poison, drugs, or even assassination of other members.

'In other words, this place is either kill or be killed.' Anna remembered the information from her past.

Unfortunately, she had never gone down this path because she had the connection of her father and teacher to smoothen her journey. It didn't take too long for her to become an Arbiter in the past and fight Noel.

But because she had never experienced the cruelty of people who worked in the dark, Noel would always outwit her.

In other words, if she underwent this progress, she would be able to become on par with Noel in terms of scheming alone.

This was a good opportunity for her because she would also gain freedom here. She was free to go anywhere around the kingdom as long as it fulfilled the condition of the nobles or the royal family.

'I have never taken this path, but this one suits me the most... At first, I thought about using my father's influence to roam around the kingdom to match Noel's movement, but with this, I might be able to do it alone.

'This way, no one should be that suspicious since people would think I'm escaping marriage. It's uncomfortable, but I think I should thank the Crown Prince for being so foolish that he becomes my reason to do what I need to do.

'Besides, Noel once said, the bigger the ambition, the more likely they rush. That's where the mistakes usually happen. That happened to me when I tried to change Noel so hard that I ended up antagonizing him.

'And this Crown Prince would surely do something whether to control me or fulfill my condition. That was where I could find the slip-up and see if the royal family was related to the Supreme Devil Organization or not.'

After considering a few things, Anna actually had no reason to reject being an inquisitor.

She said, "I already told you. I'm going to show you I'm special. An inquisitor? Fine by me."

"No. I won't give my consent on this!" Kevin shouted in anger, glaring at both Anna and Josephine. What he was afraid of was not Anna's death. If he was afraid of that, he wouldn't have allowed Anna to go to the Demon Banner Army.

What he was afraid of was the darkness of the organization. Although it gave a lot of freedom and opportunity, it was filled with cruelty. He didn't want Anna to suffer a fate worse than death.

But this was where Josephine smiled, recalling something. She remembered the conversation she had with the king a few days ago.

The king said, "There was a rumor that Anna Stargaze had killed Noel Ardagan and got sanctioned by the Demon Banner Army. She has become too talented, so we have to control her.

"As soon as she returns, you are to go to the Stargaze Family's territory to tell the marquis that he has to offer his daughter to me and marry her to the crown prince."

Josephine furrowed her eyebrows. "But I believe..."

The king shook his head. "I told you earlier. She has become too talented for her own good. If he doesn't comply, send Anna Stargaze to the organization and let her become an inquisitor."

"Huh? That place..." Josephine came from that place as well, so she was already aware of the cruelty of that place. So, she couldn't help but hesitate.

However, the king simply stated, "That's where you're going to come. Send a few people to protect her and start brainwashing her again. Make sure that she will become completely reliant on the royal family."

"Ah!" Josephine finally realized the king's plan. It turned out the king wanted Anna to suffer some hardships. Although the Demon Banner Army had danger, the army was still too good of a place since they only fought against demons whose ability was limited to their instinct.

Meanwhile, humans were crueler and they had a lot of nasty tricks that could make Anna suffer.

The king wanted to make Anna feel hopeless before becoming the light that saved her. At that time, Anna would be so grateful that she would become loyal to the royal family.

"She might be talented, but she is too inexperienced and foolish. We have to use it to our advantage."

Josephine closed her eyes for a moment, contemplating. After a while, she asked, "So, what am I supposed to say about the agreement?"

"You can say whatever you want, especially regarding the Ardagan Family. Make sure the marquis can't refuse this arrangement."

"I understand." Josephine nodded, agreeing to this request. She then immediately headed to the marquis territory to give this surprise.

However, she never expected that Anna would be this headstrong. She thought Anna had gained a little too much confidence in the Demon Banner Army that she thought she could do anything.

She didn't know the depth of the organization, which worked in Josephine's favor. This way, it would be easy to break Anna down before making her owe them.

Anna said, "Father. It seems that you're not aware of my achievement in the Demon Banner Army. Even this inquisitor thing is not a challenge for me. I will prove to you that I'm different from everyone."

Josephine couldn't help but smirk at the marquis, muttering inwardly, 'Oh, Kevin. You never expected that your daughter would be the one requesting it. It worked perfectly in my favor.'

Kevin could only grit his teeth while Anna was cursing in her heart. 'What's wrong with them? When are they going to decide whether I go or not? I have said everything that needs to be said to make sure I can go there. Do they not want me to go there?'