

S vs Rebirth 411

Chapter 411 Torture

Count Swirzel's Family dungeon.

Underneath the barrack, there was an underground prison used to imprison the people that wanted to go against the Count Family.

Normally, the prison was filled with the screams of commoners who got captured for any kind of reason or the fighters that wanted to challenge the authority of the Swirzel Family.

However, there was something different today. There were five people who got tied up inside the cell. Normally, they would be locking up two people in a single cell, but this time, the wall had been destroyed, linking up three cells together.

In other words, the five people who were being tied up could see what the others experienced. Normally, people would be scared when others screamed in pain when they could see them since they ended up imagining things worse than what actually happened. It was a psychological attack.

But this time, they could witness what happened to the others, most likely for the worse. After all, the people who were chained here were none other than the Count Family themselves.

Yes. In the first cell, his first son was chained to the wall. His neck, his wrists, and his ankles were locked up.

In the second cell, there were the Count and his wife. The wife had been screaming about all kinds of dissatisfaction she had, from how she was being treated to how dirty the dungeon was.

Last but not least, Myzik and Risha were locked up together. In Risha's case, she only had her hands left since Anna cut her legs to incapacitate her. The same applied to Myzik, who had lost his arms.

They had been treated by the doctor the Count Family had. Although he was only a Spirit Practitioner, his skill was enough to close their wounds, so they didn't die.

Obviously, Anna was the one forcing them to call him if they didn't want to die. And the Count, having no ability to fight Anna without his subordinate, could only accept it and call the doctor.

Yes, the Count couldn't put up a single fight before Anna. In fact, he gave up the moment Anna came to his room. It was clear how Anna had defeated three Peak Spirit Wielders and came to him. There was no way a normal person like him could fight her.

Now that they had been locked up here, Anna finally came without any torture equipment. She might need one if she wanted the information about them, but she believed her past self was enough to torture them.

With cold eyes, Anna walked toward the Count and his wife.

"You wh*re! Do you think you can get away after doing all this? Even if you're a marquis' daughter, you're going to die a horrible death." The Count's wife instantly insulted Anna as if she wasn't scared of her.

However, that was probably the worst choice she'd ever made.

Anna pulled out her sword and pointed at her neck. "Shut up. I'm the one in charge here. If you don't want to die, then shut your mouth!"

As expected, the wife was only trying to be strong. The moment she felt like she would die, she hurriedly shut her mouth, not daring to speak again.

"Good. You're obedient. Unlike the Count, who doesn't want to give me the information." Anna smiled.

The wife felt relieved she didn't die. She even saw Anna pulling her sword back.

Sadly for her, the moment that relief filled her heart, Anna suddenly let go of her sword, dropping it right on her thigh.

The sword stabbed her thigh and due to the weight of the sword, it fell down to the side, poking out of the flesh.

"AAAAAHHHHHHHH!" She screamed in pain. Tears were coming out of her eyes. She had given birth to her son, so she was already aware of some pain. But this time, the pain was beyond her imagination.

After all, Anna smiled coldly while saying as if she was enjoying the sight. "Oops. I accidentally dropped my sword. Sorry, sorry."

"AAAAHHHHHH!" She continued to scream. Her focus was gone and there was no telling if she could hear Anna or not.

Anna raised her sword first before pulling it out.

The Count and his son were stunned because they couldn't imagine what kind of pain she was experiencing.

Anna calmly walked to the Count and asked, "So, where is the letter? I also need to know when you are going to pay? If you don't pay, I can't go back, you know."

The Count was shaking, but there was a problem if he spilled the beans. The moment the Royal Family made their move, he might experience something even worse. All his family would be executed and that would be the end of his line.

"Ah, it seems that you can't answer me. Now that I think about it, it's already dawn. It's time for breakfast... It seems that I have to give you breakfast since I can't afford you to die because of hunger."

Anna smiled and walked away. The tension rose when she left because the madam kept screaming in pain. She was cursing Anna in tears, wanting her to die.

It took Anna fifteen minutes to come back. She brought a black pot filled with water, boiling it in front of them.

"Don't worry. I'm going to make soup. I'm sure the Count can remember it after having breakfast." Anna made an innocent smile as if she believed this was truly the case. If Noel had been here, he would have stopped Anna from going through all this. But without him, Anna could release the chains that bound her past memory from affecting her character.

"So, Count Swirzel. I hope that you're not a picky eater..."

"Kill me. You won't get anything from me." The Count spat on her, which she avoided. He knew what would happen to him, so it was better if he took the brunt and made Anna spare the rest. "Even if you try to torture them, you won't get anything. Only I know the thing you want."

"Oh... I think you forgot something." Anna smirked. Suddenly, Anna waved her sword, straight at the madam's feet, specifically her toes.

"AAAAAHHHHHH!" The madam screamed again. Her body was convulsing, shocking the Count.

"You..." The Count thought she would stop if she focused on him. But no, Anna's past life was the exact opposite of Noel's. She was extremely cruel.

"I think you forgot something." Anna picked up the toes and said, "We're talking about breakfast, not what I want."

With how Anna grabbed the severed toes, the Count felt like he knew what Anna planned to do. In that instant, his face became pale.

Chapter 412 Completing The Mission

"See this? I hope you are not a vegetarian since I'm going to give you meat." Anna pointed at the toes. "Don't worry, Count. I'm sure I can help you digest everything. You shouldn't waste food, you know."

"You..." The Count was speechless. His body was shivering, realizing Anna was much more devilish than his imagination.

Anna suddenly stopped as if she remembered something. "Ah, right. I'm making soup. So, I should boil this first..."

Anna saw the Count's horrified expression. "Ah, do you not like soup? If that's the case, I can deep fry it. Or maybe you don't like this one?"

"I'm good at cooking, you know. I can make you anything you want..." Anna thought for a moment and asked, "How about a meatball? Of course, I won't be using this as the filling..."

"That's right. How about using your wife's eyeball?"

The Count gritted his teeth and shouted, "Have you thought about karma after doing all this? You're going to the deepest depth of hell!"

Anna tilted her head in confusion. "Well, I'll certainly go there."

She knew she would go there after dying from her past life alone. No matter what good thing she did during this life, she would have to atone for the mistakes of her past life.

Since she already knew she would go to the deepest layer of hell, nothing stopped her from doing all this.

Anna said, "Anyway, we're talking about your breakfast here. It doesn't seem like you like this. Then, how about I change the ingredients? How about using your son?"

The Count was shocked once again. He wanted to stop Anna, but the latter didn't pay him any attention as she walked toward the first son of Count Swirzel.

After seeing what happened to his mother, he panicked and started shouting, "What... What are you doing? Don't come here. Help me, Father, Mother! Help me! No, don't come here. Stay away! NOOOOOO—!"

The guy screamed at the top of his lungs. But before Anna reached him, the Count suddenly said, "Spin the handle of my desk twice and it will open a secret compartment. That's the location of the letter... Please spare my son."

If his hands and feet were free, he would have groveled on the ground, begging. However, this was the only thing he could do to stop Anna's madness.

"Well..." Anna stopped and walked away as if to grab it. It didn't take too long for her to return with the letter.

As soon as the Count confirmed it, he said, "Since you've got what you want, please spare us."

"Hmm, should I?" Anna tilted her head in confusion. "If I let you go, you might try to gather force to pressure my father."

"I won't do it. I swear I won't do it." The Count had had enough of this cruelty.

However, Anna added another possibility. "Or you can tell those people about this and attack me..."

"No, please. I just don't want to do anything with this anymore." The Count lowered his head.

"Well, I also haven't received the compensation since I have to submit it to the organization."

"I'll prepare the payment today and send it right away."

"..." Anna thought for a moment, glancing at the Count's defeated face. The answer came in the form of action as blood suddenly splattered on the Count's face, startling him.

"You?!" The Count looked at Anna in shock. The swing was fast and killed its target in an instant. And that target was none other than his wife. "What have you done? I'll do anything you want."

Anna shook her head. "Sadly, you can't be trusted. You should have known that after evading tax, fund embezzlement and even smuggling... Do you think I will just blindly trust you?"

"You—" The Count raised his voice, only to find Anna's sword planted on his heart. He widened his eyes, looking at the bloodied shirt. He couldn't even let out his last words before he died.

After killing him, Anna walked toward the Count's son and smirked evilly, scaring him. "Since the Count has passed away, you are going to be the next Count. That means you have full authority over the treasury now. So, you're going to pay, right?"

He couldn't give an answer because he was too afraid of her. Anna looked like a devil in human clothing. Even the devil might look cute compared to her.

"Right?" Anna asked again. "Also, you have to hide everything about this. Just tell people that the Count and his wife have decided to commit double suicide because their business is failing. If other people know or if you're planning to take revenge..."

Anna came closer to him, whispering in a chilling voice. "I'm going to show you something worse than this."

The son gulped down and furiously nodded his head.

It seemed Anna would get what she came here for from this guy. And there was no need to fear this person since her image had been planted in her mind.

For better or worse, Noel never saw this side of Anna when his parents were 'executed.' If he had seen something like this, his hatred would be on a whole different level.

Of course, Anna planned to do the same to Risha and Myzik to get the information they had. Unfortunately, they were professional. They had burned the letters unlike the Count who loved to store them so that they could be a weapon one day.

She could only get the statement from both of them and had to leave the city without evidence, except for that single letter.

After finishing her job, Anna let out a sigh, looked at the sky, and said, "To think it would drain me this much..."

Her body was shaking, not from excitement but from guilt. She had gone a different way in this life and it clashed with the darkness from her past life.

Her mental state was unstable. She just fell on her butt while clutching her head. "I have to go through more of this as long as I'm in the organization..."

Chapter 413 Current Situation

"What is this?" The king gritted his teeth, glaring at Anna's teacher, Josephine. He was angry after reading the documents Josephine provided. After all, it stated the Count ended up paying for everything.

It wasn't supposed to happen. Anna should have fallen into the Royal Family's hands. Yet, no one could say a thing about what happened to the Count.

Their spies, two peak Spirit Wielders, had died on duty. The Count and his wife had died due to suicide.

How could he believe such a report? Something must have happened, and it was possible that Anna managed to trick the two of them, allowing her to take them down. After that, the Count was killed in order to mess with the truth.

As for the successor, the first son of Count Swirzel, he was afraid of Anna's retaliation, so he gave fake news to the Royal Family. The trauma Anna inflicted was far greater than one's imagination.

At the same time, the Royal Family had yet to know their letter to the Count was in Anna's hand. If Anna kept gathering all the proof about their Royal Family, she could gain more and more advantages against them.

Obviously, there were many families who wanted the weaknesses of the Royal Family. And if the proof was spread among the people, it would create massive chaos in the country.

However, Anna wasn't planning for a rebellion like Noel in her past life. Instead, she wanted to use this proof to investigate Noel's incident, along with the relationship between the royalty and the Supreme Devil Organization.

That was why after getting all of it, she returned to the headquarters to receive the next mission. She had to move fast so that the Royal Family had no time to think about their next move. And by the time they realized it, Anna would have become either Gold Rank Inquisitor or even Platinum Rank Inquisitor.

While waiting for her mission, Anna sat down in the bar while looking down, falling into deep thought.

'Hmm... I reached Silver Rank after the last mission. It seems the Royal Family hasn't done anything to alter the reward in the organization. Well, I can also use it as proof of the Royal Family's sabotage, so I guess they won't do it anytime soon.

'If I can reach Gold Rank, I can form my own team or even do it alone since even the head of this organization has put up the rule about the Gold Rank's privilege. Even the Royal Family can't put anyone on my team just like that.

'Still, I might need another four to six months to reach Gold Rank at my current pace. It's truly a bit hard on my body, considering my completion speed is much faster than anyone here.

'Either way, I manage to gain some stability in this place. The only thing I have to worry about is Noel. Since the organization is used to keep the balance in the kingdom, I can easily get information about the Demon Relief Squad. I guess I'll take a mission near it in another two months.

'I think Noel won't have much problem, considering he can grow at the same pace as me, who has the memory of my past life.

'Though, I wonder how long it will take for Noel to become a Vice Captain or even a Captain...'

Anna fell silent, recalling her memory of Noel. 'Noel once became the youngest captain in history, albeit with his second identity. After that, he retires and becomes a noble, re-establishing the prestige of the Ardagan Family.

'If I'm not wrong, he was eighteen or nineteen years old at that time... So, I guess two to three years. Gold Rank can be achieved in just a half year, and I might need another year to reach Platinum Rank.

'And I should use the last six months to challenge an Arbiter and get their position. When I reach that point, the Royal Family won't have too much power against me...

'Well, my father has been suppressed by them, but I am on a different path. I don't have any weaknesses they can exploit right now. And it's basically impossible for them to force me to marry the crown prince...

'Wait, speaking of a prince... the king's brother, who failed to ascend the throne, was called the Third Prince. That title still stuck with him because of his previous position, while the current king was actually the second prince.

'He refused to take on a Duke Title because of the shame he received from the current king. Still, there's no reason for him to keep that title, considering people will confuse him with the current third prince.

'Is there a deep meaning behind that title? Something is amiss...' Anna felt something wrong with the Third Prince.

'The connection between the Third Prince, Noel's parents and the royal family. I'm afraid there is something going on between them, considering the Third Prince once plotted together with my teacher...

'Is my teacher a spy? Or is the Third Prince still a part of the Royal Family...'

Anna felt Noel might also fall from the trick. Although Noel was smart, there was still a possibility of it. So, she couldn't dismiss it entirely.

'It seems I have to investigate the connection between him and my teacher. I don't know if they have made contact or not, but... I'll surely discover them.'

Anna felt fired up. On the one hand, she didn't want to lose against Noel this time. On the other hand, she also felt like the kingdom was darker than she thought.

After the reincarnation, she wanted to make the kingdom bask in golden light, so she wanted to correct the kingdom. That was why she had to investigate everything and know the depth of the darkness she wasn't aware of in her past life.

'This is making me excited. I'll know everything and make my decision at that time.'

Chapter 414 Contact

While Anna was facing a new challenge, Noel had a pretty laid-back life here.

"Iadre. Can you help me here?" Rose asked while pointing at a few stacks of wood.

"Sure." Noel immediately walked to her and helped her.

The others were glancing at them, especially Paul and Jonathan.

"Do you feel like Rose has gone back to her previous state? It seems she has moved on." Paul mentioned it while observing her.

"I'm not sure about that, but she's clearly been smiling a lot recently, which is good."

"Maybe Iadre reminds her of Noel, so she becomes a big sister just like that, making sure he's alright?"

"Do you mean a substitute?"

"Something like that." Paul nodded.

"Hmm..." Jonathan observed both of them for a while before saying, "Well, I don't really care about it. They are in a win-win situation either way.

"Iadre can get a lot of benefits if Rose takes care of him. Rose can gradually move on with Iadre. So, why not?"

"Fair enough. At the very least, we've got a temporary solution. Hopefully, it'll go well in the long run." Paul agreed, hoping for the best for Rose. Iadre would be able to reach his goal sooner if he got Rose's help anyway, so he didn't care much about their relationship.

The others seemed to have the same opinion about them, believing Iadre's appearance had brightened up the group.

They didn't realize Iadre was Noel. As expected from Noel, he asked Rose to act like she hated him for a while before gradually opening up to him. This way, the others wouldn't realize about him yet.

As for when he would reveal his identity, he would wait for a bit longer when his position had been stabilized and the Third Prince began to contact him.

Everyone was also curious about Iadre's Runes, which seemed to be an improved version of Spirit Enchantment.

However, he had asked them to not reveal it for the time being. He wanted to develop it first before he would reveal these runes so that others could use them.

Of course, he planned to teach Rose about the runes as soon as possible.

Since she was the group's eye that could only monitor the situation and inform them, she would become far more useful if she could boost their abilities with the help of the rune.

And her illusion would surely help her learn the runes.

Of course, the big reason why he taught Rose was none other than the fact Rose had become his left hand.

Luckily, the group agreed and didn't tell anyone about Noel's runes. They wanted to see the improved version of the Spirit Enchantment.

Noel even promised them he would Spirit Enchant their equipment after he gained a bit more mastery, which was a big addition to the group. Everyone surely loved the Spirit Enchantment, and if they could get the better version of them, no one would reject it.

They didn't realize Noel was bribing them through that.

Nonetheless, the group had been brimming with energy since Rose had recovered and now they were on a mission for a city's restoration after a huge battle.

This fortress was made by the Demon Banner Army as a supply base to the frontline.

After dinner, Noel returned to his room. He was just about to take off his coat before noticing a letter on the table.

"Hmm?" Noel narrowed his eyes and scanned the room. Since he couldn't use his Demon Hunter Medal to sense his opponent, he still had some good perception.

Unfortunately, he couldn't find him. So, he decided to move on and open up the letter, believing Dimitri would make his move if the enemy was far too strong.

'Two hours after dusk, the best inn, the best room.'

'Such weird phrasing...' Noel narrowed his eyes. Normally, people would normally talk in a letter, not using code like this.

However, he also noticed that they used the words 'best inn' and 'best room' instead of the specific name.

There were three inns in the town and the opinions would vary depending on the people. However, he could ask the people for the best inn and gathered the majority's vote.

However, the best room was weirder. Although he could simply go to the most expensive room, the one sending the letter should have said it that way instead of using the best room.

In other words, the best inn and the best room referred to safety and a place where privacy was guaranteed.

'Interesting.' Noel thought. There were three people who would like to talk to him using this method. The first one was Anna, but because she had to do her job as an inquisitor, she was ruled out.

The second one was his father. Unfortunately, if this was all it took for them to meet, his father wouldn't have orchestrated the whole thing. That left the third person, the Third Prince.

The Third Prince had been getting involved ever since he entered the Demon Banner Army by asking the commander to take care of him. So, he might want to check whether his investment would bear fruit or not.

Because his position was sensitive, he had to do it this way to not be seen by anyone. It was already brave of him to meet Noel in this fortress.

Of course, Noel didn't believe the entire thing easily. He also prepared some escape plans in his mind if things turned out to be different.

After that, he put on his coat again and walked to the second best inn. They had good service and a fair price. But because they weren't the best, they weren't that looked upon.

So, this was a perfect place for their meeting.

Noel also didn't go to the most expensive room, which was on the top floor. Instead, he went to the second best room, which was one floor lower.

There were four rooms on this floor, so he had to carefully pick it, lest he embarrassed himself.

Surprisingly, all of them were empty except for the furthest one.

Without hesitation, Noel walked toward the door and knocked on it.

Chapter 415 Three Requirements

Before he even knocked on the door, there was a voice coming from inside.

"Come in. The door is not locked." The tone was calm but had a pulling effect as if it was trying to attract him.

"..." Noel was startled and confused at the same time. However, he still opened the door and entered the room, finding a middle-aged man waiting for him.

The middle-aged man had long white hair. His eyes might look gentle, but Noel could feel sharp, observing gaze from it. Despite having a small smile on his face, he didn't have any welcoming aura.

His clothes were simple, only a plain white shirt and long black pants, matching his white hair.

As soon as he saw his appearance, Noel fell to one knee, lowering his head. "Noel Ardagan greets the Third Prince."

"Hmm?" The middle-aged man frowned. He didn't expect Noel to kneel down that soon, so he asked, "I believe we haven't met yet. So, did your father tell you about me?"

"No." Noel shook his head.

"But it seems you know who I am... You're not going to answer me like it's just because my hair is white, right?"

Noel hesitated for a moment before explaining his thought process. "The letter in my room is the first reason. If it's your subordinate, we won't be meeting in this place since they don't need the 'best' place to talk to me.

"Of course, the white hair played a part in my judgment, but I also took a look at your age. Your age shouldn't be that different from the current king.

"Last but not least, your eyes. I can feel that you are 'familiar' with me instead of knowing me. The former comes from the information and story, while the latter comes from reports. So, it gives two different types of gazes. Thus, the conclusion."

The Third Prince paused for a moment before clapping his hands a few times, impressed by Noel's performance.

"Interesting." The Third Prince smiled. "Stand up."

"Yes, Sir." Noel stood up and straightened his back. He maintained his poker face, but he was still observing his movement, making sure he didn't do anything to him.

The Third Prince raised three fingers. "I come personally for three reasons. First of all, you're currently too weak to even be useful. Of course, I can understand that you just started training a year ago.

"However, I'm going to need you very soon. Hence, you have to reach Spirit Master within two years. Judging from your progress, it doesn't seem to be a hard one, right?"

"I'll do my best." Although Noel was confident he could become a Spirit Master in just a few months, he couldn't really give him the assurance. After all, the Third Prince might consider him as someone who was overconfident in his ability.

The Third Prince observed him for a moment as if he wanted to see whether the answer just now was sincere or not. After a while, the Third Prince continued, "Before becoming a Spirit Master, I won't be contacting you.

"You'll know the reason why I need you to become a Spirit Master first before receiving a request from me. I'm sure you'll do it, right?"

The Third Prince asserted some pressure with his words. He wanted to see whether Noel would be loyal or not. His father was loyal to him, so he took care of Noel this whole time, expecting Noel to be loyal as well.

Although Noel was still suspicious of the Third Prince, he still lowered his head and declared, "The Third Prince has given me all the chances and opportunities during my time in the Demon Banner Army's headquarters. I'll be repaying everything, with interest."

"With interest, huh? As expected of the son of a merchant." Third Prince was a bit dissatisfied with how Noel didn't answer with only "Yes." After all, it would mean Noel had full loyalty to him. Still, the fact that Noel was the son of the richest merchant in the kingdom, he could understand why Noel said these words. It seemed he had a habit from his family.

"Then, the second reason for my visit is to give you a goal during your stay in the Demon Relief Squad.

"The goal is simple. You have to become a Captain in less than five years. Instead of becoming a lesser noble, it would be better if you get your position as a Count back and re-establish your Ardagan Family.

"If you can achieve it within five years, I promise you that you'll be getting your family's land back."

Noel was quite surprised by this reward. Although he had enough confidence to become a noble, he still couldn't guarantee he would get his family's territory back. After all, the Royal Family wanted something from his family like Dimitri said.

But if the Third Prince planned to do some work behind the scenes to guarantee him his former land, it would work great.

Although the business had been failing in his territory due to the lack of a lord, it didn't change the fact he was most familiar with the territory. Rebuilding it wouldn't be as hard as making one from scratch.

It didn't take long for him to be interested in this deal. It was a win-win situation. Noel could get his family territory back and the Third Prince had the future richest person in his palm.

Noel had no reason to refuse. "I understand. I'll do my best to become a Spirit Grandmaster and succeed a Captain's position before becoming a noble."

"Good." The Third Prince nodded, satisfied. He had seen all the reports about Noel's progress, so he expected a lot from him.

At first, he thought about giving him a ten year time limit, but since Noel could become a Spirit Wielder in just one year, he halved it instantly.

After receiving a satisfactory response, the Third Prince raised his voice. "As for the last... I won't hold back this time. Tell me the secret of your Spirit Enchantment."

Chapter 416 Reason

Noel had expected this ever since he revealed this power. He knew many people would be interested in it, including the Third Prince.

That was why he had prepared a few types of answers to dodge this question.

"My apology for not being able to satisfy your request." Noel looked down as if he was disappointed he couldn't give it to him.

"Hmm? You reject me?" The Third Prince frowned. His calm face instantly darkened.

"Yes. Before explaining the reason, I'll be telling you about how I got this knowledge."

"Go on." The Third Prince narrowed his eyes, putting on some pressure on Noel.

Noel explained, "First of all, the Third Prince should be aware of the Spirit Enchantment Book that the Greenwood Kingdom has, right?"

"Yes. I'm aware of it. That's the great inheritance of the Greenwood Kingdom." The Third Prince nodded with a serious expression.

"Then, you should know about my family."

The Third Prince paused for a moment before saying, "Your mother's family?"

"Correct." Noel nodded, confirming it. "My mother's family, the Ezenholm Family, is close to the royalty. My grandfather was a royal ian and the king's tutor. And a few months ago, I visited them..."

The Third Prince realized why Noel talked about it. "So, you're saying your grandfather told you about it?"

"That's not it." Noel shook his head. "I was lucky to take a glance at my grandfather's note in his analysis about the Spirit Enchantment."

"Hoh?" If what Noel said was true, then his knowledge would be incomplete. He only had that note and had never seen the actual book, which might be different. In fact, that could explain why Noel's Spirit Enchantment was different from the normal Spirit Enchantment.

Whether it was due to his talent or luck, Noel managed to come up with a Spirit Enchantment that was somehow stronger than the one present.

In other words, the knowledge Noel had might be incomplete, but he might have gone in the right direction. So, what Noel wanted to say was that he needed more time to perfect it so that he didn't get the blame if the Third Prince got injured because of the incomplete version.

However, there was also a possibility of Noel's lying. He just wanted to get the Spirit Enchantment for himself, raising his evaluation.

That was why the Third Prince had to consider his words thoroughly before responding to Noel.

He wanted the Spirit Enchantment Noel had because it was not only useful to recruit blacksmith or even Master Blacksmith, but it would work to pull in normal people as well.

This was when Noel added, "Of course. Once I have perfected the knowledge, I'm planning to create a book containing all the information.

"I believe the Spirit Enchantment shouldn't be limited to blacksmiths or high-status people. Instead, the Spirit Enchantment should be spread so that even a commoner can use it.

"I have seen many things after joining the Demon Banner Army. That's why I know the commoners have the right to get this kind of knowledge as well.

"After all, our true enemies are not the kingdom, the Supreme Devil Organization or any other influences. Instead, it's the demon.

"If we equip the commoners with this knowledge, we'll be able to gain an army to rapidly expand our territory, putting other kingdoms in shame.

"And after that, the other countries want to take a piece as well, making them either eliminate me or give many benefits to the kingdom for the sake of this knowledge."

The Third Prince remained silent this whole time. He thought Noel was a justice idiot who wanted to eliminate all the demons in the world. At the same time, he still preserved his business nature by giving some leverage to him.

As Noel said, even if the Third Prince had this knowledge, it would be useless since Noel could perfect it. Even if he tortured Noel for this information, the progress would be stagnant for a long time. What if Noel actually fled to another country?

There were countless possibilities such as being poached by another country, killed because of information leakage, and so on.

So, the safest path would be to allow Noel to perfect it secretly. In the meantime, he needed to gain some influence in the kingdom so that he could protect himself when others demanded knowledge from him.

This way, Noel could get some protection and he could get benefits for himself. There might be a chance for him to become a King.

Still, the most important thing was the fact Noel was a justice idiot. The fact that he was justice-oriented meant it would be easy to control Noel in the future.

He didn't know Noel was smiling inwardly, thinking, '...Or so you thought. I don't have much leverage right now, but I'm going to get some advantages first so that you have no choice but to give me some information and pull me to your side. At that time, I'll have a lot of opportunities to investigate you.'

The Third Prince was unaware of Noel's thoughts. He might look innocent, but he was actually as shrewd as his father, who even fooled the Third Prince with his death.

The Third Prince contemplated for a moment before giving his answer. "I understand. I'll give you time to perfect it. However, I'll be watching you. I hope that you don't betray my trust."

"Yes, Sir. Thank you for your trust. I'll do my best." Noel dropped to his knee again.

The Third Prince waved his hand. "You're dismissed. Remember those three things. I'll contact you again after you become a Spirit Master."

"Yes. Please excuse me." Noel calmly stood up and left the room.

Meanwhile, the Third Prince smiled, muttering inwardly, 'It doesn't seem he is as wise as his father. However, his talent is quite good. Not only is he good at fighting, but his unique perspective on Spirit Arts gives him a new insight into Spirit Enchantment.'

'The tree is not ripe yet, so I'll wait a bit longer. Noel Ardagan... no matter what you do, you're going to be playing in my hand.'

Chapter 417 Shop Upgrade

After meeting the Third Prince, Noel returned to his room. He didn't know whether the Third Prince was still observing him or not, but in any case, he wouldn't be able to find the one who monitored him.

Hence, Noel simply laid down on his back, staring at the ceiling. They had talked about a few things, but Noel also managed to hide some things from the Third Prince.

While closing his eyes, he thought, 'I already learned about the variety of runes. However, the runes themselves are divided into five main categories. The first one is the popular method that people know, the Rune Enchantment. As for the other four, they're Rune Engineering, Rune Spell, Rune Body, and Rune Array.

'They're the next four levels of Rune Mastery. Rune Engineering seems to be able to program a certain movement into an object, while the Rune Spell is basically a normal rune but embedded on something so that normal people can use it just by pouring Spiritual Energy. The Rune Body is something I might get.

'By painting the runes on my body, I can utilize those runes whenever I need them. Though, I don't really recommend painting all sorts of runes since it'll burden the body.

'As for the Rune Array, it's basically combining the four types of runes. I don't know much about it, so I'm not going to think much about it right now.

'I'm more curious about the reason why my ancestor only popularized the Rune Enchantment system. Well, if I take a look at the other four, I can kind of understand why... This knowledge could become a weapon that would destroy the four kingdoms instead of helping the people.

'For now, I don't plan to upgrade the Rune Mastery. Although I have received a few Rune Skills after upgrading the Rune Mastery, it's not enough. I have to learn the rest of the runes if I want to use them.

'I guess this is another goal for me. I just have to make sure no one gets this Rune System for the time being, considering it has a lot of potential, and the one who gets it will gain a huge advantage over others.'

'And I'm still wondering how Anna could learn the runes...'

Noel became silent after that thought. Anna had been too mysterious. His current strength came from the system. On the other hand, Anna shouldn't have the system with her. That was why he kept wondering where her mysterious strength came from.

'Sometimes, she was mature like she was a lot older. Sometimes, she was childish... just acting like her age. Does she have a split personality or something?'

Noel couldn't get the answer. So, he decided to drop the topic as well.

'Then, all that's left is...' Noel asked Ardagan inwardly, 'Can you open the shop?'

A blue screen appeared in front of him. He looked like he was staring at the ceiling, but actually, he was observing the items added to the shop.

After the training session with Dimitri, he finally got a shop update. Although he didn't know why Ardagan gave him the upgrade after completing the task, he knew Ardagan was helping him grow.

So, he didn't question Ardagan and just felt thankful for the upgrade. This was Ardagan's power after all, not his.

[Shop]

Available Points: 120 HP

1 Skill Point (2 HP)

Water Bottle (1 HP)

Water Gallon (2 HP)

Water Tank (3 HP)

Random Rune Scroll (30 HP)

Random Upgrade Scroll (30 HP)

He had seen a lot of new items from the scroll. However, there were three things Noel paid a lot of attention to. The first one was the water.

Ardagan seemed to be offering a lot of water to him. Whenever he asked about it, Ardagan only told him that water was essential to humans. There was nothing such as not enough water.

Since he was so adamant about it, Noel could only accept the answer and move on to the second thing, the Random Rune Scroll.

He was confused because Ardagan offered him something random. Of course, he could see the merits and demerits of this item.

On the one hand, Noel could learn a rune from the system and upgrade it with the Skill Points. His training speed would be significantly faster compared to learning it from the knowledge in his head alone.

On the other hand, it cost a lot of Honor Points. He knew the importance of the item. But it was random. If his luck was bad, he would get something he didn't need. If his luck was good, he might get an extremely powerful rune that was hard to master. He only had to use the Skill Points to upgrade it.

This randomness was something Noel frowned upon since it was basically a gamble.

The same applied to the next item, the Upgrade Scroll. It would upgrade one of his skills randomly. If he could upgrade the Undying Fire, which required a lot of Skill Points to upgrade, it would be worth it.

However, he had a lot of skills, so he was sure they would end up getting upgraded instead. So, Noel put this off for the time being.

This was the Shop Upgrade. It certainly gave him a lot of opportunity if he played it right, but he had to sacrifice a bit to get them.

'In any case, I still have two more months before meeting Anna again. I'm also planning to reach Spirit Master in six months since I've consolidated my foundation enough.

'All I need to do right now is to act normal and drop the Third Prince's suspicion. During that time, I'll use it to absorb as many Demon Crystals as possible.

'After that, the next phase of my plan can finally start together with the Third Prince's request. I have to get closer to him if I want to investigate him.'

Noel let out a long sigh, knowing he had so many things to do.

This was just the beginning of his journey.

Chapter 418 New Mission

Two months later.

Noel was wearing a white uniform with a long white cape. The color was the exact opposite of his previous uniform, but it matched his current appearance.

He walked confidently with a smile before hearing Rose's voice.

"Ah, ladre. You're here." Rose waved her hand with a smile as she walked beside him.

"Yeah. I heard we're going to receive a mission soon." Noel nodded with a smile.

"If I'm not wrong, the mission this time is a supply problem. Though, I don't know much about the details." Rose explained while looking up as if recalling the information.

"Is that so? Will Captain Clara lead us this time?"

"Nope. The Captain has other work to do. So, it'll only be seven of us." Rose shook her head, disappointed. "Though, I have learned a lot about the runes. Since this is going to be a mission where we can unleash all of our strength, I'm planning to show you the result of my training."

That was right. During the past two months, Noel had been teaching Rose about Runes. He was sure that the Third Prince was going to observe him, so teaching Rose was a method to make the Third Prince believe three things.

The first would be the proof of Noel's words. He could prove that he kept experiencing the rune and improving it. It was shown by Rose's progress.

The second was that the runes were still incomplete. Noel, of course, taught Rose the complete rune, but in his system, some runes were still at level one while the others were at level three.

Noel taught her some level three runes such as Increase Agility Rune and Strength Blessing Rune since it would be necessary for battle. But he taught her more about the level one runes.

Last but not least, Noel wanted the Third Prince to know that this knowledge could be passed on to someone who wasn't good at Runes. Just like one could become an expert by picking up a weapon for a period of time, they could also become a Rune Master if they were taught properly.

It increased the Third Prince's evaluation on Noel a lot since Noel would be an important piece to get people interested in Runes.

If he decided to torture him for the information, they would end up losing everything since Noel would act defiant. On the other hand, if they tried to get Rose, they might be able to threaten him, but Rose had already sworn loyalty to him. Her loyalty didn't need to be questioned.

That was why the Third Prince couldn't act for the time being. He could only wait for Noel to finish everything and get it from his hand.

Noel's plan in the past two months had succeeded since there was nothing happening around him.

And currently, he was walking with Rose to receive their new mission.

When they reached the tent, everyone seemed to have been waiting for them.

"I'm sorry for being late," said Noel calmly.

"It's fine." Paul waved his hand and pointed at the two empty seats. "You two should take a seat first. I'm going to explain our mission this time."

They nodded and took their seats. After that, Paul took out the letter and showed it to them.

"Our mission this time is located in the City of Edell, which is used as a supply point to the Surkhan Fort. It seems that there are a lot of demons around this area, so we're going to work together with the Demon Hunting Squad to handle it.

"You should expect multiple Peak Level Demons and a huge number of demons. Due to the supply problems, the fort couldn't function as a barrier, thus causing more problems on the inside. So, we have to fix the supply route." Paul explained with a calm expression.

Rose raised her hand. "Sorry, Paul. I don't understand why we need to go there... I mean, shouldn't the Sword and Shield aid them there? The Shield can help the fort while the Sword can hunt the demons to fix the city. I don't think the problem is this shallow."

"I'm also aware of that possibility. However, I can't conclude anything before looking at the situation myself." Paul shook his head helplessly. He also didn't know what to do, but they still had to go there since the mission had arrived. "Do any of you have an opinion regarding this mission? It's going to be a bit dangerous, but since we're working with the Demon Hunting Squad, it shouldn't be that hard."

"This Demon Hunting Squad... Which squad they're sending?" Jonathan asked.

"The Zero Squad," Paul answered without hesitation.

"I see. That will make it easier. But I don't really like other squads that much. They are too arrogant." Jonathan let out a long sigh.

"How about we beat them and shut them up?" Stella smirked, getting fired up.

"I don't really care personally. Without us, they can't function anyway." Zion shrugged.

"As long as they don't provoke us, we won't do anything. Though, I heard they also have a super rookie..." Ben added while glancing at Noel, wanting to hear his opinion.

Noel remained silent for a while before saying, "I don't have any interest in competing with others. I have my own goal. As long as he doesn't stand in my way, then he's not my enemy. But if he stands in front of me... I don't mind beating him up until his parents can't recognize him anymore."

Paul nodded. "Then, that's decided. Pack up your luggage. We'll be leaving after lunch."

"Understood." They nodded and stood up, leaving.

Meanwhile, Rose came to Noel and whispered to him the information about the new guy in the Demon Hunting Squad. "I heard this new guy was only eighteen years old, and he managed to become a Spirit Wielder in just three years."

"I don't want to make any enemies if possible. But if it's not possible, then..." Noel shrugged. Although Noel didn't say it, he might do something to eliminate the threat.

Rose smiled awkwardly, just believing in Noel and hoping that the guy wasn't annoying.

Chapter 419 Demon Hunting Squad

"We've arrived," shouted Jonathan, informing the people who were inside the carriage.

Everyone instantly took a peek to check the city's outer appearance. They wanted to see whether the enemies had destroyed the city or not.

But from the looks of it, the monsters seemed to be unable to deal a significant blow to the city.

Blood might have dyed the wall red, but there weren't a lot of scratches on the wall, so it was clear the soldiers managed to deal with the demons.

"There seems to be no problem. It's just that the battle should be quite brutal." Jonathan said while observing the city.

They nodded in agreement, having no problem with his observation. Rose, of course, had to look at it more carefully than the others to confirm the conditions.

"The soldiers look energetic. Their morale is quite good."

"Then, there shouldn't be too much problem with the city itself." Paul nodded in agreement. "We're probably sent here to chase after those demons and eliminate them outside."

"That's probably the reason why they also bring the Demon Hunting Squad."

"Fair enough."

After confirming the condition of the city, they immediately went straight to the city. It didn't take too long for them to enter after showing their badge.

There was a soldier guiding them to the lord's mansion. In the meantime, they also observed the living condition of the city.

Despite facing a dire situation, the people were still brimming with energy. It seemed they managed to hold on for quite a while.

"Water and food don't seem to be their problem." Rose frowned. "Why are we sent here then?"

"Maybe we have to open up their supply route. From the looks of it, they have enough strength to repel the demons," Zion replied.

"Well, we'll know about it after meeting with the lord of this city. Who is the one controlling this place again?"

"He's a new baron called Evander Ravendli. He was a former ian from the Tower Association. His rank was quite high, so he became a baron after retiring from there." Rose gave the information as usual.

"Since he doesn't seem to be corrupt, I guess we can rest assured with this one. At the very least, there's no need to be a confrontation between us." Paul chuckled. "Since the city is quite good, I guess we all can go there to discuss the situation with him."

They nodded in agreement. As soon as they arrived in front of the lord's mansion, they were greeted by a middle-aged man wearing a purple robe.

"Welcome to my city, esteemed guests from the Demon Relief Squad."

"Hmm?" The people were surprised by the words he spoke. The fact he claimed this was his city meant he was the lord.

Although he was a baron, it didn't change the fact that he didn't need to welcome them here.

It seemed his position didn't go into his head, making him arrogant.

Paul stepped forward and smiled. "We're overwhelmed by the warm welcome, Milord. To think you would personally greet us..."

"Haha, I'm the one asking you to help, so of course, I should be welcoming you personally." The man smiled and extended his hand. "It's my pleasure to meet you."

"We too. I'm Paul, the Vice Captain of the Demon Relief Squad." Paul shook his head firmly.

"Please come into my mansion. The Demon Hunting Squad should be arriving sooner or later. So, you should get some rest first." He asked them to follow him inside, indirectly implying that he wanted to tell them about his plan when the Demon Hunting Squad arrived.

Paul had no problem since the city was well-managed and the lord was kind. "Of course. We're honored."

He guided them until they were inside before a butler took over.

Because he was only a baron, his mansion couldn't be compared to that of a Count or above it. And to avoid troubling him, Paul asked for one big room, so they could rest together.

The butler ended up bringing them to the biggest guest room so that they could stay there together until the Demon Hunting Squad arrived.

While waiting, Paul asked, "So, what do you think, Rose? Do you find anything weird from their behavior or expression?"

"Not at the moment. It seems they're sincere." Rose shook her head.

"In that case, we don't have to do anything until the Demon Hunting Squad comes." Paul shrugged.

"Well, we can get some rest then." Stella instantly took off her shoes and jumped onto the bed, stretching her body while yawning. "Wake me up when they've arrived."

The others could only shake their heads, looking at the free-spirited Stella. As always, she did everything at her own pace.

As the lord said, the Demon Hunting Squad came three hours later.

Noel was watching the gate through the windows. When he spotted the master of the mansion, he instantly alerted the others. "It seems they've arrived."

The Demon Hunting Squad only sent six people this time. However, Noel knew each of them was as strong as Stella and the others.

However, his eyes were glued to the young man that stayed with them. The guy had short spiky hair with a long sword on his back.

Despite his tiny figure, the guy was carrying a sword almost as big as his body.

"So, that's the new kid. It's said he has a good fighting sense and extraordinary strength despite his small body." Paul took a peek, curious about the Demon Hunting Squad.

"Well, how is he compared to our guy..." Jonathan glanced at Noel as if expecting him to be stronger.

"Don't put too much pressure on him. Though, I still believe our ladre is stronger." Rose added with a smile.

"Yeah, yeah. We're here not to compete with them, but to complete our mission. Just don't forget that." Zion sighed.

"Since they have arrived, I guess we have to leave this room now." Ben nodded while waking Stella up.

"Let's go then." Paul smiled as he glanced at the door, hearing someone knock on the door.

Chapter 420 Situation

Inside the meeting room, the Demon Relief Squad was standing face to face with the Demon Hunting Squad.

In front of Paul was a man with the same build. He wasn't losing in terms of muscle and height. Just them glaring at each other seemed like a fight broke out.

Just like that, everyone got their own match as if they were competing with each other. Everyone except for Noel. It seemed they weren't interested in Noel because he was a newbie in the group. Even their newbie thought the Spirit Master would be his match instead of Noel.

Of course, Noel didn't care about it as long as the work was done. He also had to find some time to go around the town to find Anna after all.

She should be coming soon.

While they were staring at each other, the baron brought a map and laid it down for them.

"This is the map of the region." The baron said while pointing at the map. Even though he said that, they could only see some terrains and three structures on the map, one of them being the city itself. The other two structures were the fortress in the west and another city in the east.

"So, where are the demons?" The muscular guy from the Demon Hunting Squad asked, not planning to wait for the baron to explain the whole situation.

The baron frowned for a moment. Even though he showed some compassion since he asked for their help, it didn't mean they could just forget about manners. He had gone all the way to explain the situation to them, so at least, they had to respect and listen to him first.

"Just ignore him. Please continue. We can't rush blindly." Paul stopped him and asked the baron to continue. Meanwhile, the other guy didn't like him and glared at Paul. "What are you saying? Our squad is the Demon Hunting Squad. Our job is to hunt demons. Just give us the location and we'll kill them for you. We're not like you, who are jack of all trades but master of none."

Paul frowned before sighing. He shouldn't be the one to lose his temper, so he ignored his remark and asked the baron. "So, can you explain the situation?"

The guy wanted to rebuke him, but the baron had placed the pieces on the map.

"This is the situation." The baron stated with a strict tone as if telling them to listen to him. "We have been trying to figure out the demons' location. After one week, we found three demon nests nearby.

"The three bases are located here..." The baron pointed at three dots on the map. Two of them were near each other, while the other one was in the opposite direction.

As soon as he saw the positions, Paul frowned and asked, "So, since we're here, I guess we're going to hunt the demons in this place."

Paul chose the one with only one nest, considering it was situated between the two cities. If he could clear them, the supply route could be fixed.

The muscular guy smirked as if thinking Paul knew his place. However, the baron shook his head, rejecting the idea.

"No. I'd like to ask both of you to eliminate all the threats in this place." The baron pointed at the two nests nearby each other.

"Huh? Are you underestimating us? You think we can't handle it by ourselves?" The muscular guy snarled, not liking how the baron treated them the same even though one specialized in hunting while the other was in utility.

The baron simply stated with a cold tone. "I know both of you are strong since you two are Spirit Grandmasters. I might lose against you, but don't forget that I'm also a peak Spirit Master. I know what you're capable of, so listen to what I want to say!"

The muscular guy never thought the baron would be angry, while Paul simply didn't say anything as if he wasn't in the wrong.

Since the two had shut up, the baron continued, "In these two nests, there are a total of ten Peak Level Demons. That's why I need both of your squads to eliminate the threats here. In the meantime, I can move my soldiers to the other one, where only Advanced Level Demons are around.

"I hope that you can understand the situation and work together to handle these ten Peak Level Demons."

"Ten?" Even the muscular guy was surprised to hear that number. They could easily hunt five to six Peak Level Demons, but they had to consider it if they had to fight ten Peak Level Demons at once.

Paul asked, "Why are there so many?"

"According to the fort in the west, there is a demon outbreak involving a Superior Demon and many Peak Level Demons. The disaster has been averted, but they're still recuperating..."

The baron looked at the muscular guy and said with a harsh tone. "Seeing how you're acting this recklessly means you haven't gone to the fort despite being your headquarters, your headquarters has just finished a hard battle.

"And by sending you here means they're trying to buy some time to recuperate from their injuries. I hope that you can work together with the Demon Relief Squad to fix the supply route so that your squad can recover faster..."

The muscular guy had no words to say. As he said, their Zero Squad was ordered to return not long ago and the plan changed when they had to go to this city. So, they didn't realize there was such an event recently.

If they knew about it, they would have gone directly to the fort instead of here.

Paul, on the other hand, saw something that the Demon Hunting Squad couldn't. He pointed at the river separating the fort and the city. "Now that I look at this, the river is the problem, right?"

"As expected of the Demon Relief Squad." The baron smiled. "The fort and this city are separated by a river. And my scouts have reported to me that the bridge connecting them is half-broken. I need your squad to eliminate the monsters and fix the bridge. Do you think it's possible?"

"Time limit?"

"At your discretion."

"Alright. We'll finish it as soon as possible."