

## **S vs Rebirth 551**

### Chapter 551 Information

The count moved very fast. As soon as he received the words about the book, he had asked his subordinates to go to Christina's territory to confirm the information.

It wasn't that he didn't trust the brothel, it was just he had to confirm it so that he could give the information to his superior, the marquis.

But before he could confirm the truth, Illia had arrived at his city.

She went to his mansion in haste with the help of the brothel manager.

The two were staring at each other. If he was in a situation where he could relax, his eyes would already be all over Illia.

However, this matter was of utmost importance. Without hesitation, the count said, "Thank you for going all the way here. However, may I know the reason for you to come here?"

"I have three pieces of information directly from the owner. First of all, Countess Christina has received the book, so if you want to investigate her, you should immediately do it as quickly as possible.

"Secondly, I don't know who will win in this situation, but the biggest faction that is currently monitoring Countess Christina is none other than the Third Prince.

"Last but not least, it appears that the one visiting Countess Christina is related to the Demon Relief Squad.

"You don't have much left, Count Leinberd. After all, there is also an inquisitor coming to your city. She has been sneaking around in our brothel to find the relationship between us and the Supreme Devil Organization.

"The moment she arrives here, she will become extremely annoying. You should understand that."

"What? An inquisitor?" Although the three pieces of information shocked him, the one that alarmed him the most was none other than the inquisitor. After all, the Supreme Devil Organization was their biggest backing and the one with the most sensitive status. If exposed, they would be destroyed.

Count Leinberd looked down, contemplating for a moment. "It seems that I have to be extremely fast."

'What should I do now? Should I just report with the current information I get from the brothel? But I still have to confirm it to make the marquis believe me.

'Countess Christina is extremely strong and independent. Even after losing her backer, Count Ardagan, she is still able to withstand the pressure. It's impossible to harm her that quickly.

'And looking at the situation, she has two choices. The first one is to hand the book to the Third Prince, who is also aiming for this book, or send it to the royal family.

'Considering her backer, the Ardagan Family, sided with the Third Prince previously, she might give it to the Third Prince.

'Although not many acknowledged it, the Third Prince has a lot of influences in the Demon Banner Army. So, it seems that the Third Prince has been eyeing this book the whole time. After all, the one bringing this book is the Demon Relief Squad.

'Last but not least, Countess Christina is an excellent Spirit ian. She is good enough to assess the book. No, should I say that the Demon Relief Squad is reaching out to her to check the content of the book before handing it to the Third Prince?

'And the most troublesome thing is the inquisitor. They have suspected us, so if we don't move fast and carefully, we might end up getting destroyed.'

Count Leinberd pinched the bridge of his nose, thinking about the pros and cons of his plan. One wrong move might give away their relationship with the Supreme Devil Organization.

Count Leinberd suddenly noticed something. "Hmm. You said that the owner sent you here to give the information. However, I don't think that's important enough for you to be here, right?"

"Yes." Illia nodded. "The owner has told me to assist you in dealing with the inquisitor. But because the status of the other party is sensitive, we can only delay her. That's about it."

"Her status is sensitive?" Count Leinberd furrowed his eyebrows. "Who is she?"

"She is the daughter of an Arbiter. Her last name is Stargaze."

"!!!" Count Leinberd widened his eyes in shock. "Stargaze as in the daughter of Marquis Stargaze, Anna Stargaze?"

"Yes." Illia nodded.

Count Leinberd covered his eyes, feeling a headache. He thought, 'This is not good. I've heard a lot of the recent problems in the organization as well. Anna Stargaze has been completing a lot of missions and there is not a single noble that can stop her.'

'Even though Marquis Walford has the same rank, he is still not an Arbiter. So, if the two families clash, I'm afraid that Marquis Walford will lose. In other words, we can't touch her when she arrives.'

'I have to discuss this with the marquis. But it seems that the brothel is planning to stall her. If they can stop her for a while, I should get enough time to talk with the marquis.'

'And since they're the ones holding her back, Marquis Stargaze will be fighting them instead of us. I see. It seems that the owner of the brothel is showing us his sincerity.'

'In addition, the fact that the information reaches us this fast shows a lot of their power. We really can't underestimate the brothel. Their strength will be a great help to all of us.'

Count Leinberd was smiling inwardly, coming up with a plan where he could get all the benefits while the others took the blame.

After a few minutes, Count Leinberd opened his mouth. "I understand. Thank you for giving me this information. Please deliver my thanks to your owner. But since you have come here, why—"

"I'm sorry, Count Leinberd." Illia cut him off before he could complete the sentence. She already knew that he would invite her to stay here, but she never planned to do it. She had heard a lot from the manager after all.

"I'm honored to be invited to your mansion. However, my body belongs to the owner, so I shall stay in the brothel." She politely lowered her head.

Count Leinberd could only fall silent. After all, he couldn't offend the brothel in the current situation.

Chapter 552 Task

One day later.

Count Leinberd had used his fastest horse to reach Marquis Walford's city. Since he couldn't enjoy the 'banquet' from the brothel, he rushed to this city in order to discuss the problem with his superior.

He was received quite well by the marquis, but the atmosphere turned cold when the marquis finally spared some time to meet him.

Marquis Walford was sitting in the opposite direction while squinting his eyes as if judging his action.

"M-Marquis. You have to learn about this."

Marquis Walford fell silent for a moment before saying with a cold tone. "Do you know that your sudden visit put me in a difficult position? You should know that you have to make an appointment first so that I can prepare an entrance for you! We can't let many people know about our connection."

"I apologize, Sir. However, this matter is very important. You have to hear this first."

Hearing the plea, Marquis Walford snorted. "It's better if that's correct. If not, then you shall experience my anger!"

"Y-yes." Count Leinberd nodded with a serious expression. He immediately told him about the information he had received from the brothel. He had sent his subordinates to confirm the information and told them to send the confirmation to the marquis territory.

As expected, the news alarmed even a marquis.

His position was higher and his influence was bigger, so it was clear that the marquis knew a lot more about the situation.

He instantly gritted his teeth while stating, "This is a huge problem. We are currently affiliated with the Royal Family. We have to show them that we're their loyal subject. If this information is true, then we have to snatch the book from her hand.

"You don't know about this, but the Supreme Devil Organization has told me about the Demon Relief Squad. They have been the ones causing problems for the organization. They have told me that if we can somehow destroy them, they will increase their cooperation.

"It makes a lot of sense if you see the connection between the Demon Relief Squad, the Third Prince, and the Demon Banner Army. Then, take a look at our side. There are the organization and us.

"Since the Demon Relief Squad is important, the fact that they're the ones delivering the book means it's something important. So, the information might be true.

"And we can copy this book or even create a fake and give it to the Royal Family. I'm sure that they will be grateful to us. There might even be a promotion after this.

"If everything goes according to the plan, the organization will have a high ranking spy in the kingdom. That's why we have to use this opportunity to show both the Royal Family and the Supreme Devil Organization that we are useful."

Marquis Walford paused for a moment, thinking about his plan. He looked at the count and said, "I'm going to send you a few experts. I want you to snatch that book from Countess Christina and hand it to me.

"If you can do this, I'll be helping you take control over two other territories next to you. They are weaker than that whore, so you can easily gain their territory with my help.

"And once you become a high ranking member of the organization, you will also receive a lot of benefits."

Count Leinberd's eyes looked like they turned yellow as if he was looking at numerous gold coins in front of him. His greed was completely lit up.

If he played his card correctly, he might be able to become a marquis sooner or later. It seemed he could fulfill his ambition faster than he originally thought.

It seemed that he wasn't wrong when he switched sides.

"I understand. I shall make sure that the book will be in your hand as quickly as possible." Count Leinberd lowered his head, receiving the instruction.

"Good. As for the inquisitor, it won't be good to deal with Marquis Stargaze right now. He has a lot of pressure from the Royal Family, so his anger must be piling up. If we harm his daughter, he might direct that anger to us.

"That's why you have to tell the brothel to handle her in order to show their sincerity. Promise them that if they can perform well, I might connect them to the Supreme Devil Organization."

"Yes, Sir." Count Leinberd nodded.

After sending Count Leinberd off, Marquis Walford actually smiled. "What a fool. Marquis Stargaze has been stopping me from getting everything that the Ardagan has left behind. If he makes his move out of anger, he will also destroy you.

"At that time, I can get the book and destroy any evidence with the help of that marquis. The Royal Family will also apply more pressure on the marquis while rewarding me for handing over the book. Hahaha, I'm truly a genius!"

Neither Count Leinberd nor Marquis Walford knew at that time that they had been played by both the brothel and Anna. Though, the one who would cause their downfall was Noel's participation and plan.

They didn't know that the moment Count Leinberd left his mansion to personally inform this 'important' information, they had already lost.

After all, Illia had been cooperating with Anna.

She said she would delay them, but Anna had actually arrived alongside her and had been hiding inside the brothel. Once they got the news of Count Leinberd leaving, Illia immediately informed Anna.

"The Count has left," Illia said. She had changed her clothes from maid clothes to a tight black suit to use the night as the cover. Just like Anna, she would be infiltrating Count Leinberd's mansion.

Although she didn't look like it, Illia was only a step away from Spirit Master. So, with her help and expertise, Anna could easily get a lot of information from the marquis.

"We're going."

"As expected, he's evolving as well. I still can't see this far ahead and come up with a plan to make everything this smooth. I have a lot to learn." Anna smirked while looking at Illia. "I'll be relying on you."

Illia nodded.

Chapter 553 According To The Plan

"Hmm? There's not enough information about their relationship." Anna frowned, looking at the documents on Count Leinberd's table.

"We don't have enough to examine all of them. But we can't really steal all this information at the moment or the other party will notice," said Illia while bringing a few more documents.

They had been searching for important documents that could be used against the count. Yet, there wasn't a single document that connected him to the Supreme Devil Organization.

It felt as if he was not connected to the organization at all.

"What if the count is not connected to the organization?" Illia asked while furrowing her eyebrows. She felt annoyed if this was the case. After all, they had been suspecting the count's connection.

"Instead of thinking that way, it's better to think that the count is not important enough for the Supreme Devil Organization. I'm afraid that the middle man is not the count but the marquis himself." Anna shook her head helplessly.

"Still, we can't really approach the marquis right now. Although we have found some documents related to the marquis, it's not enough to make a move against him."

Anna thought for a moment. "What if we use the count to lead us to the marquis? You should be able to find a way, right?"

Illia contemplated for a moment. The possibility was there, but she didn't know whether it could work or not.

"Yeah. It's possible, but we have to move fast. After all, we have to use the information we've given to the count."



Anna frowned. If they truly had to use the information, it would mean that they had to go to either Countess Christina's territory or Marquis Walford's Territory.

"I guess this mission won't be as easy as I think..." Anna sighed. "If my prediction is right, I'm afraid that the count is planning to return right away. We don't have a lot of time here, so try to find any important documents and mark them so that we can retrieve them at any time. We can't let the count know about our action yet."

Illia agreed with Anna and immediately returned to their work.

As expected, the count didn't bother to rest since he had an important task that could allow him to rise even higher.

There was no way the count would let the chance slip.

Luckily, Anna and Illia had left this place. Since there might be the count's 'ears' in the city, Anna had to leave the city again. Even the brothel might not be safe, not because she didn't trust the brothel, but because the count might visit that place.

And as they predicted, Count Leinberd visited the brothel, not because he wanted some women's company, but because he had to pass the message from the marquis.

"That's how it is. If you do your job well, the marquis might become your guarantor." Count Leinberd smirked, glaring at both Illia and the manager. If not for the fact that he was in a rush, he would use this opportunity to blackmail Illia to sleep with him.

Illia gritted her teeth and slammed the table. "You are insane. Do you want us to anger Marquis Stargaze? If we use too much force to stop her, the brothel might be harmed after this!"

"That's your job. If you want to get Marquis Walford's help, you have to do your job well. If not, then you have to bear the consequences." Count Leinberd snorted, trying to assert his dominance.

Illia looked frustrated. She seemed to be considering the pros and cons of this action.

In the end, she said, "Fine. We'll do it. However, we can only stall her for three more days."

"Three days are enough." Count Leinberd smirked while standing up, ready to leave. He looked at Illia in contempt as if showing the difference in their power. He wanted Illia to think it was her honor to be appreciated by him.

In the end, Illia sent him off with an angry face as if she had just been defeated. But the moment she returned to the manager's office, her anger disappeared.

There was an evil smile on her face.

The manager, who saw her smile, couldn't help but ask, "I guess everything is going according to the plan... What should we do now?"

Illia nodded. "Yeah. That man is truly a fool like how you described. To think that the situation is this way, no wonder we can't find any trace of the Supreme Devil Organization in the count mansion."

Yes, Illia and Anna didn't expect that the count didn't have the connection. He only knew and used the marquis' connection to rise through the ranks. He was truly a fool since he didn't have any proof to take advantage of the marquis.

"He fears the strong but suppresses the weak. So, it'll be easy to manipulate him. Though, I don't think we can make any move right now." The manager took out a small piece of paper and put it down on the table, so Illia could read it.

"Hmm?" The information on that small piece of paper made her frown. "Are you sure about this?"

"Yeah. A few of our girls outside have confirmed it. And there might be some more people hiding in the shadows, so we have to be careful."

"..." Illia pinched the bridge of her nose.

"So, what should we do?" The manager asked.

Illia looked stressed as if she was frustrated with the information. But actually, she was happy because the situation was as they expected.

But the one who had planned all this was none other than a man who had just recently become an adult.

Yes, it was Noel. She didn't know how Noel knew that the marquis and the count would set up an ambush to get the book.

She was Harley's subordinate and Harley had sworn his loyalty to Noel. At first, she was skeptical about it since the other party was too green.

But the fact that he predicted all this showed his potential. If they let him grow for another decade, he would become a monster. And this was the person her master served.

She didn't realize it yet, but her loyalty to Noel gradually increased in her heart.

Chapter 554 Meet The Father?

Anna, who had been hiding in a forest two hours away from the city, had received the same information from a pigeon sent by the brothel.

And it seemed that they had to proceed to the next plan immediately.

"Haha, Noel, Noel. I wonder how you can even think of this possibility." Anna smirked.

She couldn't help but recall the time when Noel shared his plan.

"Remember. I'm going to ask Countess Christina to send the book outside the city. This will make her look like she is delivering the book."

"Huh?" She was confused. "Why would you do that? I mean, the book is important, right? Are you planning to bait someone?"

"Yeah. Countess Christina will have two books. One is a fake book, while the other is the correct one. She will bring the fake book inside and allow it to be stolen by the other parties. With enough manpower and secrecy, we can prevent the loss on Countess' side while making the other party believe this is the real book.

"And with enough show, we can make the Third Prince focus on Count Leinberd and Marquis Walford.

"So, I want you to supervise the entire battle and make sure everything goes according to the plan. Don't let anyone interfere.

"Once the battle between the Third Prince and the marquis begins, you should use it to steal some information from the marquis.

"You and I know that we can't trust both the Third Prince and the royal family. Hence, it's better not to hand them this information.

"Though, I have to apologize since you can't complete your mission this time." Noel lowered his head. He was a fair man, so he didn't hesitate to apologize if he had wronged her.

However, Anna waved her hand as if treating it as not a big deal. "It's fine. I don't know if they will accept it or not, but if the marquis is destroyed by the Third Prince, then the mission can be considered completed or get annulled. Well, everything depends on my luck.

"In exchange, promise me something, will you?" Anna's expression became serious.

"Well, as we always do." Noel nodded.

"Equivalent exchange. I know that." Anna knew that she couldn't ask him for something beyond the worth of this mission. "It's not a big matter. But I'm planning to make you meet my father."

"Huh?" Noel widened his eyes in shock. On the one hand, it looked like Anna was trying to introduce her spouse to her father. On the other hand, this meeting wasn't so simple. After all, the latter was his father's best friend and one of the people involved in the grand scheme.

If they met, Noel didn't know what he would have to say to him.

Anna smiled. "I know that my father has been hiding something. But I'm pretty sure that he wants to meet you. I don't know what he will say, but I'm trying to create a situation where both of you can meet.

"My father can't be honest with me, so I have to ask you to get more information from him. After all, you are in the center of this scheme, so he might open up to you."

Anna closed her eyes for a moment. She remembered how her father was always passive in the grand scheme. But when she thought about the freedom she had in her previous life, it seemed that her father was involved in almost every matter.

In fact, the reason Noel didn't kill her and even tried to change her might be related to her father. After considering the content of the letter left behind by Noel's father, it wasn't enough for Noel to drop his hatred.

So, her father might have met Noel and told him the real truth. She wanted to confirm whether her father pleaded with Noel to not kill her or not. This was one of the most important questions from her past life.

She wanted to at least repay some of his kindness in this life.

Noel thought for a moment and said, "I don't mind meeting him. But you should know that it's hard for me to go to a specific location, right? After all, I'm tied to the Demon Relief Squad."

"I know." Anna nodded. "I'll continue following your news. When you are within two cities away from a famous vacation destination, I'm planning to bring my father to you."

Noel fell into deep thought. He didn't know whether Anna would succeed in luring out her father or not, but Noel was also curious about what her father knew. So, he was also a bit interested in meeting her father.

"I understand. I'll meet your father if the opportunity aligns."

"Thanks." Anna smiled. "And I know that you're planning to break through to Spirit Master on this trip. You should have enough Demon Crystals, right?"

"The Demon Crystals are enough. But I still need to visit the firebird first before breaking through. I can't afford to get involved in the Third Prince's matter before it after all."

"That's understandable. I'm planning to make a breakthrough after this mission as well. Since the royal family, the Third Prince and the Supreme Devil Organization will be a bit chaotic for a while, that's the perfect opportunity to break through. That hateful arbiter is still watching me after all."

Like Noel, Anna also couldn't break through easily since their plan might be disrupted. But since the other party was planning to do it and the situation allowed her, she could finally reach the next level.

"Alright then. Since we've reached an agreement, I think it's time for me to prepare for my visit."

"Alright. Leave the rest to me. I'm going to make sure that your plan will go smoothly." Anna smiled.

Noel and Anna smiled at each other as if they knew they could rely on each other.

Rose, who had been watching their interaction this whole time, could only shake her head. She didn't know if Noel and Anna had realized that their relationship was already beyond just friends.

Chapter 555 Taken The Bait

"Sir." A masked man kneeled in front of a middle-aged man with white hair. This white hair was different from the normal white hair that people got through aging. This white hair was whiter than snow.

This was the characteristic of royalty. Most of the royal children who were born had this hair and the kingdom believed it was their royalty gene. Those who didn't have this white hair would be considered inferior.

And this middle-aged man was one of the contenders for the throne, the Third Prince.

He furrowed his eyebrows, looking at his subordinate as if judging the content of the information.

"We have confirmed that Noel Ardagan has gone to Countess Christina's territory. After that visit, Countess Christina's mansion is quite lively for a while. And we've managed to receive a rumor that Countess Christina now has a weapon to take down the enemies. She's planning to use it to destroy Count Leinberd and Marquis Walford.

"We don't know much about the weapon, but it seems to be in the form of a book. It seems that she's planning to send it somewhere else. We don't know about her destination yet, but we're putting a lot of our men into figuring out her destination."

The Third Prince narrowed his eyes. "It seems that Noel Ardagan is using the book about the runes to entice Countess Christina. She is a smart and powerful woman, so she should be able to comprehend the book and confirm its authenticity."

"Should we steal the book?"

"Noel must have left the book to her so that she could confirm the authenticity. Her reputation should be enough to make some important believe it and conduct more research. This way, it will be spread to those people and a lot more people will start looking at this book.

"It seems that Noel Ardagan hasn't predicted this result. He must have thought that Countess Christina would only do it for herself. And if he is loyal to me, then it won't be weird that Countess Christina will give the book to us.

"I thought Noel Ardagan would be smarter than his father, but I guess Luke Ardagan is at a level beyond a human. The way he thinks, the way he creates his influence, and the way he governs his people... That's what made me fascinated by him. Unfortunately, his son couldn't be compared to him."

The Third Prince thought for a moment. Although he didn't say it earlier, he believed that Noel was dumber than he originally expected. And a foolish person wasn't that much of a threat.

So, the Third Prince asked, "Where is he going after this?"

"According to the direction, he is probably heading to Lelelei Fort. It seems that he is planning to leave the border for a while."

"Hmm?" The Third Prince didn't know Noel's intention, but there shouldn't be many possibilities of going out of the border. Noel must be trying to find a way to break through. And to do it, he had to hunt a lot of demons.

Since Noel's course of action could easily be predicted, his focus returned to the book. "If that's the case, tell Countess Christina that if she gives me the book, I will get rid of her enemies for her. However, the condition is that she has to give it to me after she confirms it."

"Understood."

Before sending his subordinate away, the Third Prince also had one more concern. "How many people know about this?"

"We are not very sure right now. But getting the information is easier than we originally expected, so I'm afraid there are more people who know about this."

"How many men do you bring?"

"I bring four Spirit Wielders and more than ten Spirit Practitioners."

"Use all of them to escort the book to me. And since the current situation is dangerous, you have to report to me if something goes wrong. I might have to make my move personally." The Third Prince's expression turned cold as if he was threatening him that if he was useless, his superior would do it himself. As a result, he might not be able to keep his life.



"We'll do our best to avoid the situation where Sir has to do it personally." He lowered his head before disappearing.

The Third Prince narrowed his eyes. He felt something was amiss in this situation. On the one hand, the problem looked simple on the surface. On the other hand, he felt something might go wrong.

Unbeknownst to him, the Third Prince had been trapped inside the web Noel had spread in order to capture all the people who were interested in the book.

And Countess Christina, who had known about all the plans, was sitting on her chair with a grim expression.

On the one hand, she had studied and confirmed that the content was truly the complete version of the Spirit Enchantment. Although she couldn't use it personally since she wasn't a Blacksmith and she had never used runes before, she could still manage to form the rune on her hand.

She looked at the rune on her hand and muttered, "It's truly working. I can't utilize its power yet, but the flow of Spiritual Energy is stable.

"Judging from the content of the book, it will take an average person a year to understand the basics. Then, another three years to prepare the advanced runes. After that, it will take at least ten years for the specialization. There are even four types of runes and the Spirit Enchantment is one of them.

"If this knowledge is spread, it will cause a massive shock to all kingdoms. And Noel, who has become the center of attention because his name is attached to the book as the author... It's clear that there will be a lot of changes happening around him.

"The reason this is so important is that the runes aren't limited to blacksmiths. Spirit ians, Demon Banner Army's knights... everyone! Everyone who has cultivated their Spiritual Energy even if they haven't awakened their spirit! The world is going to change..."

Christina smirked before she destroyed the rune on her hand as she felt a presence. "It seems the fish has taken the bait."

## Chapter 556 Arrangement

The masked man under the Third Prince has appeared before Christina. They were staring at each other, but Christina seemed to be looking down on her since she was a noble while the other party was just a servant.

"Who is brave enough to trespass on my mansion?" Christina was still sitting as if she didn't feel any pressure coming from the person before her.

However, both of them knew that their strength was similar. They were Spirit Masters.

"I bring a message from the Third Prince."

"..." Christina didn't seem to be surprised as if she was already aware that the Third Prince would be coming. Still, she asked, "So, what's the Third Prince want from a lesser noble like me?"

Count was the second lowest position in the nobility rank after Baron. So, it was understandable that people often called them lesser nobles.

Despite calling herself a lesser noble, her influence and strength was enough to fight against an Earl. And with the Third Prince losing his position as the successor of the throne, she might have to be courteous to him, but not his subordinate.

"The Third Prince would like to ask for the Rune Book from you, Countess Christina. In exchange, he'll help you destroy Count Leinberd and Marquis Walford."

Christina frowned. "The Third Prince should know how important this book is, right?"

He couldn't answer it. After all, he shouldn't give out too much information even if the other party had already confirmed it.

Christina paused for a moment, creating suspense. "I have received the words from Noel Ardagan about the Third Prince. He would like to dedicate this book to him, but he asked me to confirm the knowledge first. After all, he didn't want the Third Prince to think that he gave you the wrong knowledge. That's why I can't give it to you now."

"We understand. It takes time to confirm everything. However, if—"

Before he finished his words, Christina interjected. "Also, the knowledge in this book is too complicated. Even if I try to use all my abilities, I won't be able to figure it out in a short period of time."

"Hence, to speed up the progress, I'm planning to send this book to the Tower Association. With my connection, I can create a research team to confirm the authenticity of this book..."

"That's..." The Third Prince's subordinate was in a bind. On the one hand, he couldn't deny that the wrong knowledge might harm the Third Prince. On the other hand, the Third Prince had ordered him to take the book back.

After some contemplation, "I'm afraid that we don't have that much time, Countess Christina. You should know that the time and the team will cause a lot of problems."

"Are you questioning my connection? Do you think my team will release the information?"

"That's not..."

The two suddenly stopped. Countess Christina was judging his action since he dared question her ability. The other party was annoyed because Countess Christina looked down on the Third Prince. Even though their influence was weaker compared to the past, it was still strong enough to crush her.

But before he could say anything, the burnt smell entered his nose.

"Hmm? Something is burning?" The guy widened his eyes and tried to jump back to gain some distance from Christina.

Unfortunately for him, this was Christina's mansion. There was no way her mansion had no traps, especially with Christina's strength.

In that instant, a bright red flame rose from the ground. It was so hot that it felt like it was burning and melting everything around it.

The flame gradually formed a humanoid body. It was only the upper body, but the body was muscular and the head looked like a human but with spiky hair and an angry expression. Since it formed from flame, it didn't look human.

"!!!" The guy recognized this ability and gasped, inhaling the heat. He tried to escape, but he was a bit too late. The figure had grasped him.

The heat was transmitted to the point the guy felt like he was being burned alive.

"Kh..." He used his Spiritual Energy to resist the flame. Although he wanted to use his power, he had to convince Christina to give him the book. So, it was better to look powerless and resist the flame for a while.

He knew this ability after all.

'I should be able to withstand this ability.' He thought while glancing at the figure. 'This must be the famous Fire Devil. It's an avatar created by Count Christina. It's said that this ability can burn everything it grasps, so if I'm not careful, I might die. It seems I only have three minutes to convince her.'

He gritted his teeth and said, "If you kill me, the Third Prince will send the next person. But at that time, you might not be able to make a choice right now. Count Christina, this is your time to make a choice.

"If you give that book to us, you can show Noel Ardagan's loyalty as well as crush your enemies. If you don't give us that book, you might lose everything!"

"Is that a threat?" Christina narrowed her eyes. She started emitting killing intent as if she didn't like the threat.

However, the guy shook his head and stated with a genuine tone. "No. That's a fact."

"..." Christina fell silent for a moment. The guy looked like he had a hard time enduring her fire, but he still didn't use his ability to show that he didn't mean any harm.

After some contemplation, she let him go.

"!!!" The guy was surprised that the Fire Devil had let him go and gradually vanished into thin air. And what shocked him the most was the fact that the intense heat actually burned nothing. Yes, not even a single strand of his clothes was burned. It showed the overwhelming control Christina had.

Christina waved her hand. "I have made an appointment with my teacher about this. So, I still have to send it to him. However, the case will be different if it gets stolen on the way..."

"!!!" The guy obviously understood her intention. She still had to fulfill her promise, but she was telling them to get it so that she didn't break the promise while they still got the book.

This seemed to be the best case scenario. So, he nodded his head. "I understand. I shall relay your message to the Third Prince."

Chapter 557 Hidden Misunderstanding

Three days later.

Christina was closing her eyes, waiting for the report. She couldn't help but smile as if she had known the result.

A few minutes later, a butler entered her office and reported. "Ma'am. The package has been sent."

"I understand." Christina waved her hand, dismissing him. She thought, 'What a crazy boy the Ardagan Family has. It seems that their revival is nothing but assured. It seems that I have to prepare something...'

Christina smiled, recalling what had happened a few hours earlier.

She was standing in front of her mansion, looking at ten elites that escorted a carriage. The carriage contained some good merchandise, but as expected, the most important item was a chest that contained the book.

The elites bowed to Christina before going out of the mansion to deliver the book.

She had told the Third Prince that the book had to be delivered to her teacher. However, the case would be different if someone stole it. Her teacher couldn't blame her since he didn't know the importance of the book and Christina still fulfilled her words to both Noel and the Third Prince. There was nothing wrong with this development.

Of course, these ten elites had been specifically instructed to defend the goods and run if the enemies were too strong. They didn't know that the goods they carried had such importance, so there wouldn't be any loss to Count Christina. After all, this much money in exchange for a good relationship with the Third Prince and Noel was already a steal.

The group entered a plain not far from her territory. And this was when the enemies appeared.

"Hmm?" One of the guards frowned as if he felt some presence coming from the sides. He turned around and saw a few heads taking a peek at their carts. "Bandits? Draw your weapons!"

The others hurriedly pulled out their weapons, trying to protect the carts.

In that instant, seventeen people came out of the trees and charged forward.

"Not good. They have several Spirit Wielders!" One of the guards shouted. He seemed to be the most important person because he was the one commanding the guards. "We can't afford to lose. Fight!"

"Ooh!" The guards shouted, boosting their morale. Even though they were outnumbered, running away was only the last option. They had to fight them first since they might be able to repel them.

\*Cling!\*

\*Cling!\*

\*Cling!\*

The clicking sound coming from the blades filled the plain. Even though they were outnumbered, the people Count Christina sent were elites.

They might only have two Spirit Wielders who acted as the captain and vice captain. But they were strong enough to stop five Spirit Wielders for a while. Meanwhile, their subordinates handled the rest of the enemies.

It was a fierce clash and might last for a while since both sides were equal.

They hadn't realized that someone was observing them.

It was Anna.

She narrowed her eyes when she saw this lineup.

"Hmm?" Anna muttered inwardly, "Judging from their number, I don't think they are from Count Leinberd and Marquis Walford. Then, they must be from the Third Prince.

"I see. For a Count, having multiple Spirit Wielders under her command is already impressive. But for the Third Prince, it's kind of weird. He should have a lot of Spirit Masters under his command. This feels weird..."

Anna felt something was amiss.

"Is it hard for the Third Prince to move a Spirit Master?" Anna felt this Third Prince wasn't simple. After all, the fact that he still retained this much power to influence the royal family showed how formidable he was.

So, sending these people shouldn't be his only plan.

"In that case, is he planning something else? Since he almost killed Noel in the past, he should be pretty strong himself. And fooling both of us showed how scheming he was." Anna fell silent for a moment.

She suspected that the Third Prince was planning a second ambush. In order to avoid the unexpected ambush, Anna decided to look around, trying to find them.

Meanwhile, the clash between Countess Christina and the Third Prince's forces still continued.

The captain from Countess Christina's elite squad thought, 'It seems that the Countess knows we would be ambushed. But because she told us to run away if the enemies were too strong, then she should have expected this kind of ambush.'

'I see. It seems that we have become either bait or a test. Normally, the Countess would have told us about this matter. But the fact that she didn't...' The captain widened his eyes. 'I see. It seems that the other party is quite powerful in terms of influence. She is trying to hide everything so that we don't have to shoulder the responsibility.'

'If we don't fight too hard, the enemies will realize we are just bait. If we fight too hard, the Countess will lose some manpower. In other words, we only have to do one thing. We have to resist as hard as possible. If possible, sustain some injuries but not enough to kill us or force us to retire. At the same time, deal some damage to the enemies to show our seriousness.'

With that realization, the captain shouted, "Don't be afraid. We have to protect the goods! All guards, release all your strength and defeat our enemies!"

"Ooh!" The guards responded with a shout as they began using all their strength.



Looking at this, the masked man, who once visited Countess Christina, thought, 'It seems that they haven't been told about the book. I see. It seems that the Countess is trying to make it look real. That's why we have to push them back, not kill them to avoid angering the Countess.'

'In that case, I'll hide my true power for a bit longer. After some time, I'm going to show my Spirit Master's strength to scare them, forcing them to retreat. This is probably the best scenario.'

The masked man smirked.

Both the masked man and the guard captain didn't realize that they had misunderstood each other and Countess Christina's arrangement.

And they thought they were the smartest to realize the hidden plan.

Chapter 558 Ambush

"Haaa!"

The guards and the 'bandits' were clashing fiercely. They had been fighting each other for a while. And as expected, they had spent a lot of Spiritual Energy.

They were staring at each other. The guards tried to hold on while the bandits tried to push them back.

The captain was keeping a close tab on his subordinates' conditions, making sure that none of them were heavily injured.

They thought for a moment, wondering if there was a chance to escape.

It seemed that despite the fierce fight, the enemies continued creating an escape chance for the guards.

The captain thought, 'It seems that the enemies have known about the plan. But since they're still fighting us, it means there might be some experts hiding around us, monitoring the situation. If we don't act well, those experts might realize it. Just a few more minutes and we will retreat.'

The captain shouted, "Guards. We are going to unleash the Fire Tactics!"

"!!!" The guards were surprised, but their expressions soon changed, knowing what kind of strategy they planned to use.

Suddenly, all of them began to release their Spiritual Energy. The captain and the vice captain, who were a Spirit Wielder and had awakened their Spirits, immediately stomped the ground.

The intense Spiritual Energy from the Spirit Practitioner Guards was flown to the sky because of the shock wave.

Then, the Fire Spirits from the captain and the vice captain released their fire, igniting the Spiritual Energy.

Suddenly, a huge flame burst in the air. The captain and the vice captain clasped their hands, starting to control the fire above their head.

The fire gradually formed a humanoid figure.

"!!!" The masked man widened his eyes, recognizing this power. This was the same power as the Fire Devil the Countess had.

"What?!" The masked man gasped.

"Fire Tactics, Devil Form!" The captain raised his hand. At the same time, the Fire Devil also raised its hand.

"Haaaa!" The captain shouted while waving it down.

The fire devil slammed the ground with its fire hand.

"Dodge!"

The enemies tried to dodge, but the hand caused an explosion, swallowing three people.

"Aaaahhh!" They were screaming in pain. Although they didn't die, they still suffered some burns.

The teammates who were near them tried to extinguish the fire that still burned their bodies. Meanwhile, the captain had sent another hand, trying to hurt them as much as possible.

"Not good!" The masked man gritted his teeth, realizing he had no choice but to reveal his strength. He suddenly raised his sword and waved it straight at the fire devil's hand.

A crescent-shaped energy flew toward the hand, clashing with the fire.

The sky felt like it was being split. The upper sky was bright red as if it was being burned by eternal flame, while the lower air was dyed in blue as if pushing the heat away with its coldness.

"!!!" The captain widened his eyes because the sword strike actually started freezing the fire devil's hand. He roared. "Haaaa!"

He released all the remaining energy inside the fire devil to explode the hand.

\*Boom!\*

The explosion shattered the ice and shot a few fireballs down.

"Watch out!" The masked man hurriedly returned to his teammates' position while erecting an ice wall, blocking the fireballs. But some of his teammates were a bit too far and the fireballs ended up hitting them.

"Aaahhhhh!"

His people suffered some damage.

Meanwhile, the captain hurriedly used the last bit of energy to set the cart on fire. "Retreat! The enemies are too strong. They have a Spirit Master among them!"

The Fire Tactics were used so that multiple Spirit Wielders could go against a Spirit Master. So, the fact that the masked man managed to stop them meant he was a Spirit Master.

There was no way they would stay since it would only lead to a pointless death.

The guards were a bit hesitant about that order since they had to protect the goods. But because the captain had started burning the cart, they could only follow him since he had burned the only thing they had to protect.

The 'bandits' were trying to chase after them. But the masked man shouted, "Don't chase them. We have to stop the fire and get everything inside!"

His teammates wanted to avenge the injured comrades, so they were a bit unwilling. But the masked man shouted once again, reminding them that this was an order from the Third Prince, not himself.

In the end, they had no choice but to forget about the grudge and started saving everything they could from the cart. Obviously, the chest that stored the book was built with better material, so it wasn't burned away. Meanwhile, most of the goods had started to catch fire and a part of them had been burned.

Luckily, they didn't really bother with the rest of the goods since they were not normal bandits. They only retrieved the books and let the rest burn to ashes. This would also help them clean up the battlefield.

As soon as he confirmed the book, the masked man ordered, "Let's go hide somewhere to treat the injured. After that, we shall return to give the goods to our master."

The people nodded, acknowledging the orders. Those who weren't injured immediately came over to help carry the injured and hid inside the woods.

It looked like they had passed the worst. However, they didn't know that there was one more party that had been observing them from a distance aside from Anna.

Now that the group had suffered some injuries and exhausted a lot of their Spiritual Energy, they wouldn't be able to handle an ambush from a group at a similar level.

But as expected from a Spirit Master, he managed to find their presence no matter how hard the other party tried to hide it before they arrived. Their groups were at a similar level after all.

"Not good. Rise and pull out your weapons! There's an ambush!"

As he said those words, fifteen people came out of their hiding and attacked them.

Chapter 559 Misinformation

"This..." The Third Prince stood on the ground, looking at the shattered ground, the crushed trees, and the destroyed bushes.

Although most of them had been burned, there was still some blood splattered everywhere. He could still easily find some of the sources and understood that a huge battle had occurred in this place.

He couldn't help but recall what had happened a few hours ago.

He was waiting for the good news in the neighboring city. But instead of good news, he actually received the opposite.

\*Bang!\*

\*Bang!\*

\*Bang!\*

Instead of knocking down on his door, someone dared to bang his door.

The Third Prince was annoyed and planned to confront whoever it was. But the moment he came out, he found the dying masked man.

"!!!" The Third Prince widened his eyes in shock.

"Sir..." The masked man had a hard time opening his mouth. In fact, with his current injuries, it was surprising that he still managed to stay alive.

The only reason why he could reach this place was because of his strong willpower and hard training.

"What happened?" The Third Prince's body shook. Although he didn't trust the masked man and his people that much, they were still considered an elite team. So, they shouldn't be defeated just like this.

However, the fact was different. His people were defeated so miserably that even the only person that survived almost died.

The masked man gritted his teeth and said his last words. "Leinberd... Walford... attacked us..."

These were the last four words that he managed to utter before his dying breath.

The Third Prince's expression suddenly changed. He never thought that his people would be ambushed by a mere count. Although Marquis Walford was a bit troublesome, he still had enough power to destroy it.

And the masked man had reported the matter about the two nobles to him previously, so he knew that they also wanted the book.

That was why the Third Prince was furious.

"!!!' The Third Prince gritted his teeth and said, "It seems that a mere Count and Marquis dare to stand before me. Do you think I'll forgive both of you after what you have done? You have even stolen the important book!"

The Third Prince knew that the only way to get what he wanted was to destroy the Count and Marquis.

He also received a rumor about the connection between the two nobles and the Supreme Devil Organization.

He gritted his teeth. "It seems that I have to destroy them before the book reaches someone else's hand."

The Third Prince swore that he would retrieve the book. He didn't think about Countess Christina, considering the other party had fulfilled her side of the agreement. And he didn't doubt the masked man's information.

After all, there was a reason why he was the one to lead the elite team and report to him. His ability and judgment were quite good. So, this information must be accurate.

The Third Prince didn't know what actually had transpired during that ambush.

...

A few hours ago.

"Kill them!" The masked man shouted while spurring some blood from his mouth. He was heavily injured after the sneak attack.

Never in his wildest dream that he would find himself being ambushed by four Spirit Masters and fifteen Spirit Wielders. This kind of manpower was far beyond his ability.

Even if he managed to stop two Spirit Masters by himself, the other two could either help them or crush his team.

So, the battle was immediately turned in their favor.

The masked man had no choice but to order a retreat.

In that instant, they began running away while blocking the enemies' relentless attacks. Unfortunately, the enemies continued to overpower them and their people began to fall one by one.

'What is going on? Who has this much manpower? To think they would use so many Spirit Wielders and Spirit Masters just to ambush us...'

The masked man gritted his teeth. He was angry at how the enemies mercilessly killed his subordinates. But he had to remain calm and remember their objective.

Yes, no matter how painful it was, he had to keep going to bring the book to the Third Prince.

Unfortunately, he still couldn't escape.

The four Spirit Masters had surrounded him from three sides.

Knowing he would die if he didn't stop them from utilizing their ability, the masked man had to turn around while gathering all the remaining Spiritual Energy to use his strongest ability to distract them.

The enemies felt the fluctuation of Spiritual Energy and began to activate their ability to counter him.

"Ice Rose!" The masked man shouted, clasping his hands. Suddenly, the massive Spiritual Energy burst out of his hand, forming multiple huge roses. The roses expanded in all directions except for the one where he was going.



It hit all the Spirit Masters, stalling them for a few seconds.

However, there were four Spirit Masters covering only three directions. So, one direction ended up having two Spirit Masters.

The enemies were quick-witted enough to split their roles. One of them blocked the attack while the other shot out an attack to immobilize him.

"!!!" After using his strongest ability, the masked man had a hard time circulating his energy. And this was the time he saw the incoming attack.

He couldn't help but grit his teeth. This attack would surely hit him.

'My Prince...' The masked man thought he wouldn't be able to deliver the book or the information.

But it seemed that fortune was smiling upon him.

Suddenly, there was a figure falling from the sky, slashing the attack aimed toward him.

\*Bam!\*

The ability exploded, engulfing both of them.

The masked man didn't know what happened, but within that smoke, he felt that the shock wave from the explosion hit the chest he carried and ended up knocking it down.

"The chest!" The masked man gritted his teeth as he had to retrieve the book.

But at the same time, he heard the unknown figure's voice.

"This ability... It shouldn't be the Captain of Marquis Walford, right? And that blocking ability should be Count Leinberd's strongest knight..."

#### Chapter 560 Second Phase

"!!!" The masked man was shocked when he heard that information. He didn't know who the person was, but it was clear that she had helped him.

However, what made him believe her the most was when she answered his doubt after that statement.

"Hurry up and go. The Countess has sent me to help you to make sure the goods have been delivered. But since the situation has become like this, it's better to send the message instead of the book."

The voice was small, but it was clear enough for the masked man.

He understood the real intention of this person. It seemed that the Countess knew there would be another ambush. No, she might not be certain, but she certainly had some suspicion. That was why she sent this mysterious person to confirm the goods.

Only the Countess knew about their agreement, so the fact that she knew about the agreement meant they were on the same side.

In that case, the masked man had no choice but to abandon everything and use all his abilities in order to escape from the pursuit.

At the very least, he should let the Third Prince know that the book had been stolen by the two nobles.

Yes, there might be a possibility that the news was fake. But after confirming that the mysterious person came from the Countess, the other person should know about their identities. After all, Countess Christina had been facing the two nobles for so long. So, there should be a lot of information about the two nobles.

That was why the masked man hurriedly ran away as quickly as possible. He didn't know the condition of that mysterious figure.

His only thought was to survive and relay the information.

Unfortunately, the experts also managed to catch up to him and the mysterious person kept distracting them.

In the end, the mysterious figure had to leave since they were near the city. It should be enough for the masked man to remain alive.

And she led one Spirit Master and a few Spirit Wielders, which soon died under her hand.

But for the time being, the information had been delivered.

...

In the end, the people under Count Leinberd and Marquis Walford had to leave after finding their people dead. They were angry, but they had priority.

They didn't realize that the mysterious person was watching them from a distance the whole time.

She was sitting on a tree while letting out a long sigh. She took off the hood, revealing her blond hair.

Yes, she was Anna.

"This is truly hard..." Anna took a deep breath, trying to recover her Spiritual Energy. As expected, it was a bit hard for her to take down these people. Of course, she wasn't alone this time.

She glanced at five women on the ground. They were the elite teams from the brothel that Harley had lent her in order to complete the task.

"Thank you for helping me," said Anna while jumping off the tree. "The enemy has retreated, so we should go to Count Leinberd's city after recovering our Spiritual Energy."

"Understood." They nodded, acknowledging Anna's instruction. Although they were loyal to Harley, the latter had told them to obey Anna since her ability was within Noel's plan. So, they had to obey her.

Anna nodded while looking at the distance. "The second phase has been completed. I guess it's time for the third phase. Time to make everyone the culprit."

Of course, they also sent a letter to Illia, confirming the situation.

As soon as she received their letter, Illia couldn't help but smile.

The manager understood the meaning of that smile and said, "It seems the plan is a success..."

"You know about the plan?" Illia narrowed her eyes. On the one hand, she had never told her about the plan. On the other hand, the manager should be smart enough to guess it. After all, the manager was the one in charge of the brothel branch, so they had to be at least that smart for an espionage organization.

"I don't know about the plan. But seeing your smile alone is enough for me to know that the plan must have gone according to the plan."

"..." Illia fell silent for a moment. It seemed that she had lowered her guard because she was in the brothel. She shook her head and returned to her poker face before saying, "Anyway, I want you to spread some information."

"Understood." She nodded with a serious expression.

"You should know this. The owner is trying to impress someone. So, if you do well in this operation, there is a chance that you will be able to go to the headquarters."

The manager smirked. As a manager, she obviously knew the privilege between the branches and the headquarters. Everyone dreamed of going there, so this was something she wouldn't miss.

"Understood. I shall work perfectly." The manager politely bowed to her and left the room to execute the plan.

Illia glanced at the paper on the manager's hand. It was the list of information that they wanted to spread.

She thought about it for a while before sighing. "One mistake might end up hitting our headquarters as well.

"So, there will be no promotion if there is a mistake since the headquarters might be destroyed and we have to build a new one."

Illia sighed. "To think that the owner didn't exaggerate the Ardagan Family a little bit. Everything is going according to his plan. And we have put the blame on the two nobles. The Third Prince will start destroying them.

"So, all we need to do is to ensure that the information will become blurry and the Supreme Devil Organization and the Third Prince will be confused by the information. Hence, no one can be blamed other than the two nobles."

Illia shook her head helplessly, wondering how Noel came up with this plan. But it seemed that working under him would allow them to prosper even more.

If Noel had been here, he would have seen the change in her affection for him.

Name: Illia

Affection: Loyal (20/100)

Description: Someone who has acknowledged you and believed in you.