

S vs Rebirth 731

Chapter 731 Set Off

"I am Damian Fletcher. The vice commander of the Greenwood Kingdom's royal family." Damian stated his name, his gaze fixed on Nicole.

"Nicole. Platinum Inquisitor." Nicole also introduced herself, but her tone was cold as though she didn't trust the person from another country.

However, Noel ignored that fact and said, "Since you have known each other now, it's time to get moving."

Nicole stopped him by asking, "Before we leave, where are we going? I can kinda understand the direction and the location where you want to go, but I don't have a map of the terrain. So, it'll be troublesome if we just enter an unknown area, considering there might be a lot of risks such as a hidden demon nest."

Noel also had this question when he received the information from the system. However, the reward from Ardagan was much more powerful.

He actually gave him an image of the map and the distance. It seemed that Ardagan took advantage of his ancestor's memory to draw this map.

So, Noel took out a scroll from his back and handed it to her. "This is the map."

The map depicted a vast expanse of land beyond the border. There was a mountain standing majestically in their way. There were two rivers meandering through valleys. Most of the areas were covered by trees.

There was a marking that seemed to be only two weeks away from their location. But due to the uncertainty of the terrain and the unknown dangers the outside world had, they might need a month to reach the mark on the map.

In addition, there was no additional information about the danger or demons hiding in the area, forcing them to be even more careful.

Nicole furrowed her eyebrows while opening the scroll. It took her a few minutes before she asked, "Are you sure this map is accurate?"

"Aside from the danger area, the map should be giving the terrain information accurately," Noel confirmed without hesitation.

Nicole thought for a moment. 'Although we can't know the details about the danger, having a detailed map like this is enough. If everything that is drawn here is correct, then we can predict the places where demons are most likely to create a nest. Still, to think that this guy has this kind of map... Who is he?'

'He manages to invite this vice captain of the royal army from another country. He is also an expert at a similar level. One of them is enough to kill me with ease, let alone two. It seems that Anna wants me to take part because she wants to be useful.'

'I see. I get the gist of the situation now.' Nicole let out a long sigh. "Alright. Do you mind if I hold this map during the trip so that I can check the terrain and confirm our location?"

Noel nodded. She was the expert, so he didn't plan to interfere with anything she did.

Now that they had reached an agreement, the group finally left.

Since this was the first time they cooperated with each other, Noel had to take the reign of the group.

"Damian and Dimitri will observe from the rear. Anna and I will be cooperating with each other to fight as many demons as possible. It'll make the trip last longer, but this is a part of the training. So, I hope that you two can agree."

Dimitri nodded without hesitation, not doubting Noel's decision. He must be frustrated about the two defeats he suffered in succession, so he must want to get stronger to avoid such a thing anymore. So, he supported his decision completely.

Damian, on the other hand, added, "I don't mind, but whenever it gets too dangerous, I'll make a move. Some superficial injuries should be fine since we have a healer here, but having fractured ribs or broken bones will cause a lot of problems on the trip, right, lady Healer?"

"Call me Nicole. But yes, I can easily heal superficial wounds and some internal injuries, but bones will take longer to heal, at least two to three days, depending on the damage. So, it'll become a problem once you suffer that much damage." Nicole agreed with Damian. This trip was dangerous, so they couldn't make the trip too long.

Noel and Anna exchanged looks. They agreed with the condition.

Noel opened his mission, making sure which missions he could complete in this mission.

[Mission: Meeting the Hermit]

[Description: Meeting the Hermit and finding a way to learn from him.]

[Reward: Fighter Medal and three random runes of Rune Body.]

[Penalty: ???]

[Mission: Peerless (2)]

[Description: To prove your might, one has to fight a few enemies of the same level. Defeat five Peak Level Demons by yourself in a single battle.]

[Reward: Union of Sword, Spiritual Step, and Elite Medal.]

'With my new strength, I should be able to handle five Peak Level Demons by myself, right?' Noel thought while furrowing his eyebrows. Even if he had to restrain himself by using only one element, his fire element should be enough to defeat five Peak Level Demons.

"If an opportunity arises, may I fight against five Peak Level Demons by myself? I need it to improve my strength." Noel asked right after he agreed that Damian would help if the situation went bad.

"..." Damian's eyebrows twitched, wondering if Noel heard him or not. But Noel met his gaze with a determined look as though this was important for his improvement.

"As long as you are not injured heavily, then I don't mind." Damian could only sigh.

"Thanks. This means a lot to me." Noel made a gentle smile. He didn't know about the two new abilities and the new medal, but those three should be powerful. So, he truly needed them if he wanted to survive.

While they were thinking about Noel's request, Nicole warned them about the danger ahead. "Hey, you guys. We have company ahead. Seven demons ahead, and there are more in the left and right."

Chapter 732 In Sync

"Should we loop around them?" Nicole asked.

As expected of the world outside the border, the number of demons increased drastically. They were moving quite fast. Since Anna and Noel were already Spirit Masters, their speed was similar to that of a horse. And this speed allowed them to maintain a proper form and conserve their stamina.

Once they heard Nicole's question, Noel answered with a clear mind, "We will break through them. Anna and I will take the front. Dimitri and Damian will take the sides in case they charge at us."

"Got it." Dimitri took out his sword and faintly emitted his killing intent.

Damian had no choice since Dimitri had made his move, leaving Noel and Anna behind.

Nicole was surprised that they didn't hide their intention to fight these demons, but before she could say anything, Noel and Anna sprinted past her.

"..." Nicole sighed. She could also fight, but since she was a Spirit Grandmaster, she should watch over them before helping them. "There are one Peak Level Demon and six Advanced Level Demons. Be careful."

"Got it." Noel and Anna answered at the same time as they increased their pace. Their movements were in sync as though they understood what each other planned to do.

Noel could see a herd of buffaloes. They were mostly black in color, but there was a bigger one whose size was twice as big as the rest. Its color was red and a single sound from him caused the six buffaloes to charge toward Noel and Anna.

Each buffalo was emitting Spiritual Energy. They concentrated the energy in their horns. If Noel and Anna took this head-on, there was a chance that they would be stopped.

However, Noel and Anna actually smirked as though they felt these enemies were easier than they expected.

When they were about to clash with the buffaloes, they jumped toward each other, exchanging their positions.

"!!!" The buffaloes tried to follow their movement, but they ended up hitting each other.

Still, these demons were Advanced Level Demons. They still had intelligence and good ability.

Even though they crashed into each other, they still managed their balance, allowing them to continue and exchange their target.

Unfortunately for them, the slight disturbance was all Noel and Anna needed. They were about to slip past the buffaloes.

Noel struck a buffalo's horn as though he was challenging the buffalo into a battle of strength.

The buffalo's eyes turned red, and it stomped the ground, trying to drag Noel's sword away. However, Noel actually didn't put any strength into this swing, letting the blade drop from his hand.

And that was when Noel touched the buffalo, pouring his fire element onto its body.

In that instant, the buffalo was covered in an overbearing black fire.

It looked like Noel defeated an Advanced Level Demon in a single move, but it didn't change the fact that he threw his weapon away.

'Idiot. Why did you throw your weapon away?' Nicole frowned, wondering if Noel had a proper education as a swordsman.

But before the sword touched the ground, there was a black flame coming from Noel's other hand. This black flame turned into another hand as if it was the extension of Noel's hand.

This was the result of his training. He couldn't show the result in the last mission, but his control had reached this level.

He managed to use his flame to catch the sword. Then, he swung it again to the second buffalo. The second buffalo was ready for the same trick, so it slowed down its momentum.

But Noel actually made a complete swing, striking the horn as hard as possible. Due to losing its momentum, the demon got stopped on its track. After that, three giant swords appeared above the demon and skewered it.

As for the last demon, Noel used his Circular Sword Strike to fight against the energy on the demon's horns. It had equal strength against the concentrated energy from the demon, but that was enough for Noel.

Damian had shown him the possibility of Rune. So, he used the Floating Rune, one of the five new runes he got from the survival mission. It caused the demon to move upward and float in the air.

But because the sword struck its horn, a slight upward movement caused the sword to hit the demon's head instead of its horn. As a result, the sword sliced the demon in half.

"What?" Nicole was stunned, never expecting that Noel could actually defeat three Advanced Level Demons in rapid succession. He also didn't lose a lot of his momentum as he skillfully chose his movement in a way he could approach the Peak Level Demon while killing the three Advanced Level Demons near him.

Surprisingly, Anna also finished killing the demons at the same time as him.

"What is—" Nicole gasped. The pair approached the Peak Level Demon.

The Peak Level Demon gathered its energy in its throat before opening it to let out a roar that alarmed the demons around.

But the moment the jaw dropped, the demon couldn't produce a sound.

Its body began to feel numb. When it took another look at its body, the demon realized the electricity was stopping his movement.

The demon hurriedly circulated his energy to remove the effect of the electricity, but that was when Anna struck the demon's neck, trying to kill it.

Anna's movement accelerated at the last second, taking the demon aback. However, a Peak Level Demon was still capable of dodging this attack, albeit barely. Her sword still grazed its neck.

However, Anna made a playful smile as though her job wasn't to finish him. The demon widened its eyes and turned its head around, albeit it was too late.

Noel used the Fear Emotion to his Everchanging Emotion to increase the speed of his swing. He swiftly beheaded the demon. Yes, Anna was in charge of immobilizing the demon while Noel delivered the killing blow.

As a result, these seven demons died without being able to fight back.

Nicole dropped her jaw and made an awkward smile, "What's wrong with these two..."

Chapter 733 Growth

This was the first time Nicole saw them fighting together. She never expected that there would be someone as ridiculous as Anna.

Of course, she had been following Anna's news the whole time. Her growth only made her shake her head helplessly.

She thought no one would be able to stop her once she grew. There was even a rumor that she killed Noel Ardagan.

She wasn't completely aware of this situation, but it was clear that Noel was the only rival that could match Anna's progress, considering they both graduated at the same time and headed to the same squad.

With Noel out of the picture, she thought it would be impossible for anyone to come close to Anna. But it turned out this masked man managed to do it.

On the one hand, she wanted to think this man was Noel. On the other hand, there was no way they were the same person, considering they had different hair color, eye color, and elements. Hence, she wondered about the identity of this masked man.

While the two took care of the seven demons, Damian and Dimitri eliminated the demons in their direction, making sure that the group could advance without any problems.

It seemed that their strength was beyond Nicole's imagination. A Spirit Grandmaster like her wouldn't have any problem eliminating those demons, but Damian and Dimitri killed all of them in a single move.

'Anna and the masked man are one thing, but those two are insanely strong as well. It seems that the probability of this mission is higher than I originally thought.'

Nicole reconsidered her opinions of them and said to Noel and Anna. "You two are great and completely in sync. It's the first time I see Anna matching someone's movement like that. More importantly, that person is a male. I know it's rude to ask, but may I know the relationship between you two?"

"What are you talking about?!" Anna hurriedly stopped her.

"I was just asking. If you didn't want to answer it, then that's fine." Nicole shrugged. "I was just curious since Anna had always beaten all the boys that came near her in order to escape marriage."

Anna frowned, trying to cover her mouth. Her expression was telling her not to continue to embarrass her.

Nicole smiled and finally raised both hands, stopping her remark. At the same time, she kept glancing back and forth between Anna's flustered face and Noel's poker face.

In the end, she said, "In any case, I have seen your abilities. To think you would be able to defeat a Peak Level Demon without letting it do anything... If this is the case, then I can be a bit bolder to increase our pace."

Noel and Anna had managed to kill a Spirit Master when they were still Spirit Wielders, so this feat wasn't enough to show their entire prowess, especially after becoming a Spirit Master.

Still, they both knew that they needed more enemies to get stronger.

The group took out the Demon Crystals from their bodies before continuing their journey.

Of course, they had agreed with the split.

Anna and Noel would receive fifty percent of the split by themselves since they wanted to use this opportunity to get stronger. Damian, Dimitri, and Nicole had to split the rest.

Dimitri, however, chose to dedicate their shares to Noel, causing Damian to not want to lose in the initiative. Nicole also didn't want to let Noel reign supreme.

In the end, Noel received both Damian and Dimitri's shares, resulting in him getting sixty percent of the total Demon Crystals they acquired during the trip while Anna took the rest.

Continuously increasing the Spiritual Energy Reserve would cause their foundation to be weak, but Noel had learned a lot of abilities and tried to master them, so he could advance pretty far.

According to Dimitri and Damian, he could at least make his way near the peak of Spirit Master during this trip. Meanwhile, Anna had all the memories from her previous life, so she could advance whenever she wanted.

Hence, she chose to match Noel's pace while making Noel believe she was doing her best to reach the next level. This way, they could maintain their rivalry, which stimulated their potential.

They continued their way toward the hermit's location. They found thousands of demons and killed almost a thousand of them on their way.

Noel's strength increased by leaps and bounds. After a week, they managed to cover a third of the distance.

Noel shouted while pointing forward, "Anna!"

"All right!" Anna slipped past him, using her lightning to boost her speed. In an instant, she reached the Peak Level Demon not far from them and struck it from above. The electricity from her blade sparked and electrocuted the demon, but due to the demon's size, that slash wasn't enough to kill it.

Noel took that opportunity to catch up to Anna and waved his sword with the Circular Sword Strike, cutting the demon's body.

"Hu..." Noel let out a breath of relief while looking around. There were at least fifty demon corpses in the area. They had just cleared a demon nest that stood in their way.

After taking out their Demon Crystals, Noel used his fire to burn all the corpses. Due to the overbearing flame, it didn't produce smoke and smell, which was extremely important for the group.

Anna remained on his side as though she was protecting him while he did his work. But more importantly, she was observing the way Noel handled his flame.

His flame actually tried to match the shape of the demons. Noel had been improving his control by using his flame in different shapes. After realizing that matching the demon's corpse would allow him to improve considerably, he had been disposing of the corpses all this time as a part of training.

Anna couldn't help but think, "Since when did he get this good at controlling his flame?"

Unbeknownst to them, the one that got shocked the most was Damian. He had another thought when watching these two, "Why did he progress so fast? Was it because of Anna Stargaze?"

Chapter 734 Come

"Was it because of Anna Stargaze?" Damian wondered. He had been observing Noel this whole time, considering he had taken this trip as a part of his training.

Surprisingly, Noel's growth couldn't be compared to the time when he was with the Demon Relief Group. The flame that he had a hard time controlling this whole time gradually took shape and became his foundation. And he did it within a week.

That was why he couldn't understand how Noel managed to do it. Besides, there were other aspects, such as Spiritual Energy and Noel's body, to be considered.

Damian didn't know about Noel's system. He had several missions that would repeat themselves with a new challenge while giving Noel a boost in his physical ability.

Those were the missions in the Training Tab. He had Running, Push Up, Sword-Swinging, and even sparring missions in this tab. There was also a Demon Hunting Mission for his Medal. This spurt Noel's growth to a whole new level since this place was filled with demons.

The trip forced him to run, the demons made him swing his sword, and he also made time for his personal training.

Without knowing this secret, all he could think was that Anna Stargaze was the source of Noel's growth.

'Don't tell me, there is a connection between Noel and Anna? Wait a minute, Noel once said that if we ever tried to make him marry someone from our place, they had to beat Anna Stargaze...'

'If I'm not wrong, Noel should have some interest in Anna. But there is a kind of barrier that is stopping her from acknowledging that feeling. If I think about the politics of this kingdom, I can somehow link them together.'

'I see. I think I can figure out his intention. Since he considers Anna number one, he tells me to bring the challenger to Anna. If Anna remains undefeated, which is more likely to happen, he is planning to marry her. This way, with their growth, they would be able to reach a greater height than no one has ever seen before.'

'But the Ardagan Family should've been wiped out by Anna Stargaze's words, right? Is there something missing? Even Dimitri, the servant of the Ardagan Family, didn't do anything to her this whole time.'

Damian made a weird smile, forcefully connecting all the dots. 'I see. There seems to be a hidden scheme between the Ardagan Family and the Stargaze Family. The Ardagan Family wanted the Stargaze Family to execute them, making them look like an arch-nemesis.'

'However, they let their children rely on each other and eventually become a couple. No one would ever think that an arch-nemesis would become a couple, right? Thus, their union will cause the entire kingdom to shake. I'm not sure about their plan, but with two talented people like them being together, I can't imagine how talented their kid will be... I guess this is the hidden intention of those two families. How sly... I should report this to His Majesty later.'

Nicole didn't care about the complex stuff that would result in their relationship. She actually accepted Noel because Anna had been smiling all this time no matter how rough the situation was.

After a while, they gathered together as Nicole pointed at a spot on the map. "Alright. Hear me out. We have two big problems that we're going to tackle. We're about to reach the mountain."

"After observing the type of demons near this place, I have realized that if we go around the mountain, we'll be tackling a similar problem."

"If we go to the left, we'll meet a lot of cliffs where the demons usually reside. There might even be a Superior Demon in this place.

"If we go to the right, it's going to be a swamp area. When gathering herbs for cooking, you should find a lot of poisonous herbs. I believe that the swamp area will be filled with poison. And the water will surely be contaminated."

"Then, should we take a longer detour?" Dimitri asked while furrowing his eyebrows.

However, both Noel and Anna took the same action. They pointed their finger at the mountain and said the same thing, "It'll take too long. Go straight."

"..." The people were speechless, but it seemed that Nicole was about to suggest this as well.

"Yes. We haven't encountered a lot of flying demons. If we climb the mountain, we might have to face some, but the problem won't be as big as the other two paths. Besides, taking a longer detour will take at least five to seven days with our current speed. Hence, we should go straight!"

...

In the middle of nowhere, a hut was standing tall, not far from a waterfall.

There were two people near the hut. The first one seemed to be a young man. He had spiky brown hair and a robust body. However, one thing that made him stand out. Instead of a pair of human ears, there was a pair of dog ears on top of his head.

Meanwhile, the second person was an elderly man. He looked completely like a human, but there was one thing that differentiated him from a human.

Both of them were sitting underneath the waterfall, allowing the water to beat their bodies. Their faces remained calm, but the water made their clothes wet.

If one took another look at the back of the elderly man, they would see scales that covered his entire back.

While they were training, the young man suddenly opened his mouth, "Master... I can feel your mind getting distracted. Are you fine?"

The elderly man smiled. "I'm completely fine. It's just... I think we'll be having some guests."

"Guests?" The young man couldn't help but open his eyes, staring at the elder.

Surprisingly, the latter also opened his eyes. However, his eyes looked completely lifeless as though he couldn't see anymore. Despite being blind, the eyes still emitted Spiritual Energy, making the lifeless eyes glow.

The elderly man said, "Yeah. They are rather interesting... I wonder if they can reach this place."

He paused for a moment before giving a mysterious quote. "You can reset time, but you are unable to manipulate it..."

Chapter 735 Reaching The Peak

Noel and the others had reached the foot of the mountain. They looked up, observing the towering mountain.

It had lots of pointy rocks sticking out and looked very scary. But that wasn't all there was to it, they could see fluctuations of Spiritual Energy coming from the mountain. It was clear there were a lot of movements between the trees that covered the mountain.

There were one to two hundred demons standing in their path and there should be the same number of demons on the opposite side.

Noel and the others had decided to climb the mountain. Even though the mountain was filled with demons, this was the best path. Even if there were a lot of demons, they shouldn't be high ranking demons.

"Remember, we have to kill the demons as quickly as possible. We can't let the demons alert the others as there is a chance that it will cause a lot of ruckus to the point it reaches the valley and the swamp area." Nicole pointed at the top. "As soon as we reach the top, we have to get down immediately. After all, the demons' senses are more sensitive than us. They would be able to surround us in all directions if we are stuck at the top."

They nodded, understanding Nicole's concern.

"Unfortunately, it seems that we can't allow you to hunt as you like, Master," Dimitri stated while taking out his weapon.

"I know that already. Safety is more important than training." Noel nodded with a serious expression.

As soon as they reached an agreement, they hurriedly climbed the mountain.

There were a lot of noises coming from the mountain. However, they couldn't back down. They used the pointy rocks as their footholds and kept jumping, increasing their climbing speed.

However, trouble soon came. Since the pointy rocks were sticking out of the mountain, there were hardly any covers from the trees.

It didn't take too long for them to be seen by nearby demons.

Nicole warned, "Coming from the left!"

Damian immediately turned in their direction, finding four High Rank Demons. With a single wave of his hand, he covered these demons in a thick layer of ice.

After that, Noel took out a few rocks the size of a human head and formed the Forward Enhance Rune behind those rocks. The rune energy shot the rocks forward, hitting all the frozen demons.

Those demons ended up breaking apart. With this, Damian didn't have to reach their location to kill them.

Damian glanced at Noel first and nodded to him as if giving him approval. After that, he continued moving forward.

Nicole couldn't be bothered by what they did since she had to be at the very front, scouting the area ahead.

"There are ten demons coming toward us from both sides and the front."

Damian and Dimitri took out their weapons and were ready to kill their targets. Even Nicole decided to help them.

In the end, Noel and Anna killed two demons while the other eight were split between those three.

They continued to climb the mountain without any sign of stopping. Even though the air had gradually become thin due to the elevation, they still had to keep going.

This was also another reason why Nicole wanted them to go down as soon as they reached the top.

The mountain's height was almost two thousand meters. They would have a hard time breathing on top of the mountain.

Aside from the number of demons they had to encounter on their way up, there weren't a lot of problems. They just had to keep doing this good work until they reached the top.

Their pace steadily increased as a result of them getting used to fighting in this type of terrain. Even Noel continuously refined his steps while aiding them with his runes.

Noel was extremely versatile with those runes. He could attack them from afar with runes or cut them with his sword. Once he got his mastery, it would be hard to fight him.

That was why Anna also began using all her abilities, except for the runes she had learned in her previous life. She couldn't make Damian think she had all Noel's knowledge after all.

The closer they were to the peak, the more efficient their movements became. Before Nicole even warned them, the two top experts had executed the demons.

The climb might take thirty minutes, and at least eighty demons had been slain, but they finally reached the peak. No more demons stood in their way.

All that was left would be climbing down and reaching their destination in another week.

"Finally. We have reached the top!" Anna's eyes flashed. The moment she reached the peak, the entire horizon expanded.

The world felt like it was spread out below her. The sun was shining brightly, making everything look golden and beautiful.

If this was an adventure, it would feel like all the hardships were worth it. It would surely relieve some fatigue just watching this beautiful scenery.

Unfortunately, it seemed that the situation was more serious than she originally thought. After all, Nicole was cursing everything beyond the mountain. "I hate this mountain."

She could kind of understand why Nicole didn't like it. Beneath them, they could find several buildings that had been abandoned. The buildings weren't big, so it looked like a camping site that the previous civilization built.

And not far from the foot of the mountain, they could see a high-rise building, appearing to be the den of demons.

There were some asphalt roads that hadn't been covered by greenery, so it was clear that the two buildings were connected.

If they took another look at the horizon, they would find a few dots in the horizon. Those dots were not demons. They were buildings like this one. It seemed that there was an abandoned city ahead.

While this might be a great discovery, this would probably become the biggest hurdle for the group.

Chapter 736 Trust

"There are unknown facilities ahead?" Damian stopped while dropping to the ground as if trying to hide himself.

Even Dimitri hid behind a tree before getting absorbed by the shadow.

Anna grabbed Noel's head and pushed him down, causing him to fall to his knees.

They were taking cover behind a boulder while peeping at the mysterious facilities.

Last but not least, Nicole. She was the scout, so this might be a hard task for her.

She examined everything and said, "There is a camping site in front of us. It has been abandoned, but I'm sure there will be a lot of demons waiting for us there. As for the tall building at the foot of the mountain, it seems to be what they call a 'Hotel.'

"The tall inn that the previous civilization created. There might be things to find from there, but with how it's connected to the camping sites, I'm afraid that there will be a lot of demons hiding there as well."

"In addition... I'm not sure about it, but I think I see a city on the horizon. That alone is enough for us to know that this area was well-civilized in the past. There must be a lot of buildings that have been covered by all these plants. We'll be in trouble if we go this way."

Anna furrowed her eyebrows. They had done so much to climb this mountain, so she didn't like the option where they had to go back and even take a detour.

However, Noel held her hand as if trying to take her attention.

"!!!" Anna was startled, looking at their hands. But Noel only took her hand because she had used that hand to push him down earlier.

Noel whispered, "Time to make a detour. You said that I was able to reach the destination when I was only a Spirit Master, right?"

Anna paused for a moment before nodding her head.

"In that case, I should make a safer option. It's better if we take a detour, even if it means the journey will take far longer than we originally expected. If there is a city up ahead, we have to move extremely far away from it. Let's choose the safer path."

"..." Anna let out a sigh. There was one reason why she was unwilling. It wasn't that she wasn't thinking about safety. It was just her instinct didn't pick up anything as though the buildings had no demons around them.

However, if she told them that everything came from her instinct, everyone would think she was crazy. So, it seemed that they had to take a detour.

"Let's go back," Noel said to the others while turning around. But he was stopped by the sight that awaited him. "That's..."

"What's wrong?" Nicole turned around after observing the area ahead. She wondered what Noel saw and ended up getting shocked. "Flying demons?"

There were a lot of demons flying toward them. They weren't aware of their presence yet, but if they reached this area, they would soon find them and the clash between them would alarm the presence of all the demons around the mountain.

Dimitri had to come out from the shadow and say, "This is not looking good. If we return now, they will spot us."

"But if we go forward, we will be fighting the demons in those buildings," Damian added while gritting his teeth.

"What should we do?" Nicole asked. "We have been surrounded by demons. There aren't enough covers for us as well. The best shot would be to kill those demons before they alarm the others. But their numbers... I don't think we can kill thirty demons in an instant."

"..." Damian and Dimitri looked at each other, wondering if they should use their True Spirit Body. But the fluctuation of Spiritual Energy would alarm the others.

"I can cover us with black shadow, but I don't know if they will recognize us or not." Dimitri gave a suggestion.

No one could reply to him, but surprisingly, Anna also gave a suggestion.

"Since both of you can use the True Spirit Body, you should be aware of the Spirit Link, right?" Anna asked.

"Yeah. My Spirit Link allows me to merge with shadows." Dimitri revealed his secret, not because he had a loose mouth, but because he wanted to give options to them in case that ability actually gave them some inspiration.

Damian also decided to reveal his. "Mine allows me to feel the Temperature accurately."

Noel also had formed a Spirit Link with Heisk, allowing him to share her senses. In other words, he gained Spirit Sense through the Spirit Link.

But it seemed that Anna was only talking to them, not him. She said, "My Spirit Link gives me the instinct of my spirit. I can sense the dangers around us. But surprisingly, I can't find that feeling from the camping site beneath us, only that tall building at the foot of the mountain."

"!!!" Damian and Dimitri widened their eyes. "Are you telling us that your instinct is telling you that there are no demons in the camping site?"

"Yes. But I'm afraid that you can't believe such a ridiculous testament."

Damian gritted his teeth. What she said was not wrong. Meanwhile, Dimitri came here for Noel's sake, so he asked, "Master. I shall follow your decision."

Hearing it, Damian also decided to leave everything in Noel's hands. If it was a wrong move, he would start thinking about breaking through and escaping from this place.

"Tsk." Noel tightened his grip on Anna's hand and said, "I am the only insane person who would believe in you!"

"!!!" Anna suddenly got pulled by Noel as they were the first ones to jump off the peak, heading straight to the camping site.

"You..." Even Anna never expected Noel to have no hesitation in believing her ridiculous statement. As he said, Noel might be the only person who would put complete trust in her words no matter how ridiculous it was.

And this trust felt so heavy in Anna's heart. There was a desire creeping inside her heart.

'Ah, I don't like this. I feel like I can't win against him. I feel like... if the entire world is against me, he will probably be the only person who will trust me.'

Chapter 737 Teasing

Noel and Anna were the first ones to jump off, heading straight to the abandoned camping sites. They had to move fast before the demons on the mountain noticed them or the flying demons reached their position.

The others were following right behind them as they had decided to follow the two.

As they descended the mountain, there was a conflicting thought in Anna's mind. She never thought that Noel had this degree of trust in her. On the other hand, she wondered if she could even do something like that.

Yet, amidst this surge of emotion, Anna continued focusing on her instinct, making sure that it wasn't wrong.

'There is truly no demon in that abandoned camping site.' Anna thought while looking around. She felt a faint threat coming from that direction, but they were a bit far, so they seemed to be safe for the time being.

Nicole increased her speed while saying, "I'll scout the area in front."

Damian and Dimitri moved to the side, making sure there was no demon attacking them. If they were spotted, the situation would become extremely complicated after all.

As soon as they stepped foot on the abandoned camping site, a strange calm settled over them.

"Hmm?" Anna furrowed her eyebrows. The absence of demons created an eerie tranquility in the area.

Unfortunately, they didn't have time to explore the situation. Nicole hurriedly opened one of the building's doors with her power and said, "Come in!"

The camping site looked like a dome made of glass. The side that was facing the peak of the mountain was being painted with color, making them unable to see whatever was inside.

But when they looped around it, they would find that the other side was transparent.

They hurriedly entered the dome, taking shelter until the flying demons were gone.

"Dimitri," Noel called his butler's name, signaling him to use his power.

Dimitri nodded and reached out to the curtains on the side. He pulled it to the other side, but because of the passing of time, it became so brittle that the curtain dropped down.

Dimitri clicked his tongue and used his shadow to attach it, but Damian decided to help him by freezing the curtain on the wall, completely covering everything inside.

Nicole maintained her position near the door to check the situation.

After making sure it was safe, she finally let out a long sigh and said, "There are no demons coming. We just have to wait for the flying demons to pass us."

As soon as they heard the confirmation, the group felt relieved.

"Still, what's wrong with this site? Shouldn't this place be occupied by the demons?" Noel asked while looking around.

His question captured the others' curiosity. The serene atmosphere in this place made them calm down, and they began to look around, examining this place.

When their gaze shifted to the curtains, they could imagine the breathtaking view of the mountain.

Within the dome, the ambiance exuded an air of elegance and comfort, giving a luxurious feeling. They could find a bed, the same big screen Noel found in the mysterious facility, and even the pencil.

It was covered in dust and couldn't be used anymore, but it didn't change the fact that they were within one of the buildings from the previous civilization.

"What should we do in this place?" Damian asked. "It's true that we didn't plan to explore this place, but it didn't change the fact that we were within one of the facilities. Should we explore this place at the very least?"

"We should think about what we should do after this..." Dimitri shook his head. "Our objective remains the same. And even if we can stay in this place, there will still be a lot of demons in the facility at the foot of this mountain. So, we have to return and avoid all this."

"Hmm?" Noel looked down, contemplating. Before making a decision, he asked Anna, "What do you think? No, what do you feel right now?"

Anna looked down for a moment, focusing all her senses on her instinct.

"There are a lot of demons in this mountain. The building ahead is too far, so I can't be sure."

Noel contemplated his choices and said, "How about using this place to camp first? The sun is about to set, so I think this will be a great spot to relax. In the meantime, Nicole can scout the area ahead, especially that building. If there are demons in that place, we'll return to our original spot and avoid this area."

Nicole didn't have any objection to this suggestion. They were quite exhausted after continuously fighting demons while making their way toward this place. So, it would be better to feel a bit relaxed in the middle of their journey.

Nicole then glanced at Anna. "In that case, we will be together in the dome next to this one."

"Actually..." Anna raised her finger with an awkward smile. There was something she wanted to talk about with Noel.

This feeling crept into her heart when Noel showed such trust. So, she thought it would be right to tell him about it.

But because the request looked excessive, she couldn't help but make a weird smile. "...I want to have a discussion with Noel, so I'll remain here for the time being."

"Huh?" Nicole was confused. Anna had been in the same tent as her this whole time, so it was surprising that she suddenly wanted to remain here. It sounded like Anna was making an excuse to sleep with Noel.

Anna and Noel's identities were extremely sensitive, so sleeping together would cause a lot of problems.

"You are planning to sleep with him? Tell me honestly, have you two got engaged or something?" Nicole was completely stupefied, trying to understand their true relationship.

"What? Engaged?" Anna was bewildered as Nicole misunderstood her. She only wanted to talk with Noel. That was all. But the latter interpreted it in a lewd way.

And surprisingly, it was not just Nicole. Dimitri suddenly opened his mouth. "Master. I have prepared the bed."

Both Noel and Anna turned around, seeing Dimitri standing next to the bed. Surprisingly, Dimitri had cleaned up the bed and changed the sheet so that it was suitable for them to sleep, causing them to be speechless.

"..."

Chapter 738 Thanks

"..." Noel shook his head helplessly while Anna tried her best to explain it. "I truly wanted to talk about something, not sleeping together. How in the world did you interpret it that way?"

Damian chuckled and said to Dimitri, ignoring Anna's response. "As expected of a butler, you truly support your master."

"Of course," Dimitri proudly said. "My Master is the only son of the former Count Ardagan. I should do my best to help my Master prepare an heir for the next generation of Ardagan!"

"Wha—!" Anna dropped her jaw to the ground, not knowing how to respond.

Nicole looked down and muttered, "Ardagan and Stargaze, huh? If I'm not wrong, Master told me that Count Ardagan is his best friend. They are close like brothers. In fact, if they were opposite genders, they would have married each other."

"You too, Nicole?!" Anna's eyebrows twitched as she was eager to berate all of them.

"Why did you even bother correcting them? Did you not notice they were just teasing you?" Noel shook his head helplessly.

"That's..." Anna bit her lips and asked, "Are you not embarrassed as well? They misunderstood our relationship, you know."

"Hmm... I don't really mind. In fact, I wonder what would happen if my wife were the most talented and strongest person in the Muivell Kingdom. Won't she be able to accompany me all the time? I'm planning to go to the top after all." Noel looked at the ceiling as if he was imagining it.

"You..." Anna gasped. Noel actually admitted it. She couldn't help but blush, thinking, 'Wait, what? Is Noel always thinking about this? He actually likes me and wants me to become his wife. Wait a minute. Is that going to happen?'

'Well, if I think about it, in my previous life, only Noel challenged me. In fact, we'd been fighting for so long that I thought he had been with me for the longest... Don't tell me.' Anna looked at Noel in shock. On the one hand, she couldn't imagine her being his wife. On the other hand, she couldn't think of anyone better than Noel.

But it seemed that her delusion was being distracted when Noel failed to maintain his poker face.

"Pfft." Noel tried his best to hold back his laughter, only to end up with a cough.

"Gah! You... You teased me!" Anna's face became red like a boiled shrimp. She was so embarrassed that she even thought about it. She couldn't help but strangle Noel's head, trying to get back at him. "You..."

"Haha." Noel chuckled. Without them realizing it, Noel had changed the mood. They were exhausted and the tension was rising due to the demons around them. But with this simple exchange, the mood became relaxing.

While taking on Anna, Noel glanced at Dimitri.

Dimitri understood his role and asked Nicole and Damian to leave the room quietly. The demons also had passed them, so they could leave the building and enter another one.

After they left, Noel finally grabbed her hands and asked, "So, what do you want to talk about?"

"Huh?" Anna looked around and realized the others had left. She was too embarrassed to the point where she didn't even notice their movements.

"..." Anna wanted to dig a hole and hid herself inside. But in the end, she just dropped to the bed and covered her face with the pillow. "It's not fair."

"Alright, alright. Take it as the teasing was too excessive, sorry." Noel smiled while sitting next to Anna. "You looked like you were about to say something important, so I thought about making you relax a bit."

"..." Anna fell silent for two minutes before she turned around, lying on her back. "Actually, I wanted to thank you for your trust. Never in my wildest dream would I think that you could trust me unconditionally like earlier. Even though the execution was proven to be fake, you should still hold some grudges against me."

"Hmm..." Noel contemplated for a moment. He didn't deny there were still grudges between them. But he didn't openly admit it either as though it was something unsolvable. He asked, "I should be the one asking, why were you trying to sacrifice your life for me? With that True Spirit Body..."

"I..." Anna shut her eyes while scratching her head, not knowing how to express it. "You should know that I could see my alternate life, right?"

"Yeah." Noel nodded.

"Back then, I was completely an insane woman. I killed all people without mercy to the point where I could be called a psychopath. Yet, you were always there for me. You appeared to be trying to kill me to settle our grudges, but when I thought about it, you had multiple chances to kill me.

"You wasted all those chances away as though you didn't want to kill me. When I saw that scene, I couldn't help but wonder why you never wanted to kill me. From one thought to another, it ended up leading to the idea that you were trying to help me."

"Yeah. You tried to change me. That was the reason why I suddenly came to you during the Demon Banner Army's training. I was still broken back then, trying to change myself. And after knowing you, I continued to change, which I hope for the better. I learned how wrong I was and wanted to fix my personality."

"That was why..." Anna paused and looked at Noel. She made the most genuine smile that she ever had. "Thank you, Noel."

Noel was stupefied. This smile felt like it penetrated deep into his heart. The smile carried what seemed like decades of memories. And all of it led to him.

There was no way Noel wasn't moved after all that. He had a hard time fighting against the need to look away from her.

"Hmph!" Noel slammed his body down to the bed to distract himself. "I did all that?"

"Yeah." Anna chuckled. "I might not experience everything, but I still have kept track of everything that happened in that alternate world. The information there was similar to ours. That was the reason I could find out about a lot of things."

"Noel... I don't know if it's possible, but do you want to join hands with me? Once this journey is over, I want to tell you about important information. I'm sure that with your brain, you can take advantage of this information better than me."

Chapter 739 Freedom

"Once this journey is over, I want to tell you about important information. I'm sure that with your brain, you can take advantage of this information better than me."

Noel raised his eyebrows, not expecting Anna to do all this. He asked, "Why did you choose to do this? I mean, you looked like you were planning to keep it a secret previously."

Anna smiled, raising her finger. "To be honest, I would like to keep it a secret for a bit longer. However, the more I try to change the situation, the more information that becomes irrelevant. That's why I don't know what I should do with this. In fact, I believe that you should be the one who has all this information, not me."

"Is that so?" Noel thought for a moment. "To be honest, learning all this means a lot to me. However, I'm not sure how this is beneficial to you. It feels like I'm going to owe you a lot because of this."

Anna chuckled. "Hahaha, owe me a lot, huh? After seeing that alternate world, I actually felt like I was the one owing you. This time, I want to help you."

"At the end of the day, the one who did it was me in that alternate world, not the one lying down next to you right now."

"That's true." Anna glanced at Noel and asked, "Why do you think he spared me?"

"Hmm? I'm not sure. After all, I don't know what he has experienced in that place." Noel obviously didn't know what the other him experienced. However, it was clear that there was a reason why Noel chose to save Anna.

"How about making a guess?" Anna playfully requested. Since it was the Noel from the previous life, the current Noel should have some guesses that might lead to the mystery.

Noel chuckled and replied with a smirk. "Maybe I have fallen in love with you?"

"You are teasing me again." Anna hurriedly rebuked him because of what happened earlier.

"Hahaha!" Noel laughed for a moment while raising his hand as if trying to grasp the sky. "If I have to make a guess, it will probably be like what you said earlier. What if we actually joined hands? Could we reach a greater height?"

"Do you mean you wanted to change me and marry me to reach that?"

"No." Noel shook his head. "It's far beyond that. What do you think is the most expensive thing in this world?"

Anna thought for a moment and asked, "A Spirit Transcendence Expert? No, someone above that, the Spirit King stage?"

"Nah, you're off the mark." Noel paused as if recounting everything he had encountered so far. He had one answer. "The most expensive thing in this world is freedom."

"Freedom?" Anna was confused. "I thought you were going to say time or something because you couldn't rewind time no matter how much you paid for it."

"Rewind time, huh?"

Anna suddenly fell silent, realizing that she had just rewound her time. She didn't know what happened, but rewinding time seemed to be possible. Though, it might just be a miracle that she couldn't describe.

"Not really. Maybe there is a way to rewind time? I mean, there are a lot of unique spirits... There might be a Time Spirit among them. I don't know about their abilities, but just thinking about it, doesn't it look like rewinding time is possible?"

"That's... true." Anna couldn't help but wonder if Noel actually had a Time Spirit or something. Maybe, he encountered someone with that very spirit. However, it raised another question as to why he used it on her instead of himself.

If Noel actually regressed, wouldn't he be able to solve everything by himself?

While she was thinking about it, Noel continued, "You can probably hire that person to rewind time. It might be expensive, but it's possible. However, you can't buy freedom. You may think a slave is able to buy their own freedom... You may think that someone can be bailed from prison..."

"Or you can probably think that you are able to create a nation where you can do anything you want with enough money. However, that's not freedom."

"A slave might be able to free themselves, but what if someone plots against them again, causing them to be enslaved once again? It will create an endless cycle of money."

"You can escape from the prison by bail. However, that record will continue to haunt you. If you are a noble, you might be able to restore your reputation, but what if someone as strong or even stronger than you chooses to dig it out and use it to defeat you? That's also not freedom."

"The same applies to that of a king. You can have all the money in the world to buy everything you want, but there will be a lot of responsibilities that follow. If you don't fulfill your responsibility, you will end up getting enslaved by the chain of disaster."

"That's why for me... Freedom is the most expensive thing in the world. What does it mean to be completely free? It means that you can do anything you want without restraints... whether it's from your responsibility or the chain of fate. That's what I believe to be freedom!"

"..." Anna fell silent for a moment. This was the first time Noel talked this deeply with her. So, she couldn't help but ask, "But by changing me and even helping me, doesn't that make me one of your responsibilities? Or can you say that my fate is now intertwined with yours?"

Noel smiled. "That's because it's impossible to gain that level of freedom. The me you saw probably understood it."

"No matter how I struggled, it would be impossible to succeed. Instead of bearing this burden alone, I chose you to help me. It didn't need to be perfect. If having you next to me allowed me to gain a higher level of freedom than anyone else... I don't think it's a bad idea."

Anna shut her eyes, wondering if that was what the previous life Noel actually thought.

Chapter 740 A Favor

"Does that mean that you're planning to pursue me now? I'm letting you know that I'm not that easy."
Anna tried to tease him back.

"Woah. I wonder how you can be so confident? I just talked about philosophy, and somehow you linked it to how much I wanted to marry you?" Noel looked at her as if he was disgusted.

Anna flipped her body so that she could look at Noel's face from above. "Is that so? Are you sure about that?"

She knew that Noel would express it that way, so she looked like it didn't bother her a bit.

Noel couldn't help but flick her forehead.

"Ouch! What are you doing?" Anna asked while rubbing her forehead. "Did you just lose an argument with me and choose to retaliate with that flick?"

"It is not that simple. What I wish to do is something that comes with a huge price... I'm not going to let someone shoulder that burden for no reason." Noel shook his head. "I have my own responsibilities, you know."

Anna smiled. "As expected of Noel Ardagan, I guess?"

"Of course." Noel rose from the bed and said, "In any case, I want you to know that I recorded your promise. Once we're done with this trip, you're going to tell me a lot of things."

"I am not someone who will take back my words." Anna harrumphed. "But it will take a long time to tell you about everything."

"I have a lot of time. Besides, I might have a question and we can even create a road map about everything that has happened so far, connecting the dots."

"Haha. Do you know it will take at least a week to do that?"

"Are you not up for it?"

"Of course, I'm ready! Besides, I'm also curious about what you can find from my information." Anna suddenly grinned, teasing Noel, "When that happens, how are you going to pay me? Don't tell me you're going to pay with your body?"

"Maybe I should flick your forehead with my sword..." Noel let out a long sigh.

"Hehe." Anna made a cheeky grin as if she had just won an argument.

"I've told you about my two spirits, right? Those two have a 100% conversation rate, meaning that I have twice the limit of normal people with that 100% conversation rate. In other words, I can reach a higher stage with at least half the requirement, let alone with the fact that you only have a 95% conversion rate or other people are lower than that... Do you know what I mean?"

"So, you're going to the top?" Anna asked with a serious expression.

"Yeah. Just think of it as me owing you a favor for now."

"I am also a noble, you know. I'm going to make sure to charge you with a high interest."

"As long as it's reasonable, I don't really mind. Don't forget that the favor will be determined by how useful your information is. If you force me to pay an exorbitant price, I won't pay."

Anna extended her hand. "Then, we have a deal?"

Noel shook her hand without hesitation. "We have a deal."

After reaching an agreement, Anna rose from the bed and looked at Noel with a relaxed expression. "You know... After talking about this with you, I feel refreshed. The weight on my shoulders seems to have disappeared."

"That's good for you." Noel sighed. "Still, since you saw yourself in that alternate world, you should have learned about runes as well, right?"

"Yeah."

"Do you know about Rune Body?"

"I know." Anna nodded with a serious expression. "It was the rune that was painted on the body, allowing you to activate the rune just by pouring your Spiritual Energy into that rune. You could say that it used your body as the base."

"Indeed."

"Are you planning to ask me to paint the rune on your body?" Anna asked, understanding what he wanted.

"That's what I want, but it seems that there are things that have to be done first." Noel paused. "I also want to know about the True Spirit Body."

"True Spirit Body, huh? You shouldn't think about this for the time being. After all, if you are trying to invoke that ability as a Spirit Master, the price will be your life force."

"Then, does that mean it's alright for you to use it, but I can't?" Noel frowned.

"No. I don't mean that way. But if you're still adamant about it, then my answer remains the same. I won't teach you about the True Spirit Body." Anna was simply worried that Noel would abuse it.

But Noel added, "Even if it means I am going to die because I lack power?"

"It's precisely because you're being targeted that I can't teach you about it. I'm sure that you're going to abuse that power! Instead of the True Spirit Body, you should learn everything from the hermit. That's why we even hold this trip."

"..." Noel sighed in disappointment. He only wanted to get stronger.

"How about this? As soon as you reach the Spirit Grandmaster, I will immediately teach you about the True Spirit Body."

Noel thought for a moment and nodded. "Alright. We shall do that."

"In that case, we shouldn't waste too much time here. We should regroup with the rest, have dinner, and discuss our next move."

What they did was the same as what she said. They had dinner together and discussed their current condition as well as their path.

The discussion didn't last for too long before the conclusion was made. In fact, they all reached the same conclusion.

The road ahead was filled with demons. Even Nicole couldn't find a gap in their rank. Dimitri and Damian could fight, but it would be troublesome if Superior Demons joined the fight. And this time, there were two Spirit Masters, Noel and Anna.

Hence, there was only one thing to do.

"Retreat!"