

S vs Rebirth 871

Chapter 871 A Letter

"Congratulations on having a new noble, Your Majesty."

"Congratulations."

Everyone started to applaud, congratulating the birth of a new noble. However, that was just a pretense. They all knew that the king was planning to exile Noel.

With the threat coming from both the demons and the Supreme Devil Organization, he might not be able to last long.

However, due to the fight between two Spirit Transcendence Experts, the commander of the army and the strongest Devil Saint, the Supreme Devil Organization probably couldn't do anything to him for the time being.

The moment they recovered, it would be Noel's time to die. And there was no way the Royal Family would just leave Noel alone. They would probably put some pressure to slow down Noel's progress.

"Alright. Since it's a joyous occasion for our kingdom, we'll discuss the rest of the matter at a later date. You're dismissed." The king waved his hands with a serious expression.

They didn't know that the king had already wanted to exile Noel. However, he still couldn't believe that Alexander would personally request it.

Now that Anna had given her statement, it would be clear that Noel and Kevin would become Anna's enemies.

In other words, the king had gained Anna's support and completed his part of the agreement.

Once everyone left, the king's expression darkened. "As expected of the Ardagan Family, I guess... To think that a lion cub, who has never been trained as a lion, would return as not a lion, but a dragon."

No one could predict the fact that Noel had the same talent as Anna. Unlike the latter, Noel didn't have any interest in cultivating his power, so it was always unknown.

That was why he was a bit perplexed on the current matter.

"Either way, I have finished my part. I wonder how long that guy can hold on..." The king clenched his fists.

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Meanwhile, the other ministers and Arbiters were discussing Noel. The opinions were split. The first side wanted to form a connection with Noel, considering they could learn Rune and gain someone as talented as Anna. But the second side thought it was foolish because it would be better to side with the Royal Family. In the end, the Ardagan Family had been defeated once.

In the midst of their discussion, there was a big conflict brewing... the conflict between a father and a daughter.

Kevin didn't even bother to look at his daughter as he left, showing that their opinion had completely split.

On the other hand, Josephine approached Anna, saying, "You have done a good job, Anna."

"I'm merely finishing the thing I couldn't previously." Anna shook her head calmly. She was indirectly implying that she was supposed to kill Noel in the past, but it appeared that she had failed to do so. Hence, she made him the perfect target for execution.

"That's good then. We have to finish all our businesses." Josephine nodded in approval.

The others could only look at them, not knowing what to say. Anna might be a new Arbiter, but her strength and influence had grown exponentially in just one week. Her suitors increased as they wouldn't find any woman stronger than her in the future.

Surprisingly, Anna bowed her head to Josephine and did the same thing as her father...leaving. Everyone could only see her back, realizing that there would be another battle in the Stargaze's family.

The Sword Arbiter, who watched everything unfolding, could only shake his head. 'It's a shame that such a talent will be buried. The Ardagan Family is an extremely influential family with Dimitri protecting it. But if Noel could survive the ordeal, there might be a new Spirit Transcendence within a decade.

'However, because of Anna's stance, it is most likely that these two will clash. Only one of them will survive. If Anna defeats him, the royal family will gain all the control. They should have been planning to marry her into the royal family.

'But if Noel wins, no one can question the Ardagan Family in the future. It might become not only the wealthiest but also the strongest family in the kingdom, surpassing the Royal Family.'

The Sword Arbiter was lamenting the fact that these two geniuses had to fight each other to death. It would be wonderful for the kingdom if the two actually joined hands. The kingdom would definitely feel safe as the two would dominate the entire battlefield.

Unfortunately, having a power surpassing the Royal Family was something they weren't allowed to do. After all, it would threaten the national security.

The other ministers still continued discussing the ceremony as it would become a big one due to Noel's talent and achievement.

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Stargaze Family.

Anna had finally arrived at the mansion of the Stargaze Family in the capital city. When she was about to enter, her father was standing right behind the door while crossing his arms. I think you should take a look at

His expression was cold as though he treated her not as his daughter anymore.

Anna remained expressionless, asking, "May I know if you have a business with me, Father?"

"Follow me." Kevin's tone was strict, not allowing Anna to reject it.

When the servants looked at their gestures and expressions, they were horrified. It felt like Anna and Kevin were going to kill each other.

Kevin led her to his office. Before saying anything, Kevin waved his hand once as Spiritual Energy covered the entire room. He then said, "You've put a great act there..."

His expression instantly mellowed. Anna did the same and let out a long sigh. "It feels suffocating. But I have done my part. This way, I don't owe him anymore."

Kevin already knew that Anna was on Noel's side. Although he didn't know the reason why she chose that place, there should be a good reason. On the other hand, Anna believed that her father could see through her act, so she applied even more pressure to make it more real.

Now that they didn't have to act anymore, Kevin asked, "Do you know that Noel will be returning soon? I've just received a message from him."

"Is it from Dimitri? Noel is supposed to remain in the Greenwood Kingdom for a bit more, right?"

"No. It's from Noel. He wants me to pass this letter to you."

Anna grabbed the letter hurriedly, surprising her father with that swift action.

'I have become a Spirit Grandmaster and forged the Spirit Link as well as taking the Awakening Pills. Although it's a shame that I couldn't use my True Spirit Body, I am not the same anymore.

'If there is a chance, I do want to fight you seriously to settle who is better among us. But that's for later since I'm going to be busy.

'After all, I have to build everything from scratch and teach runes to my disciples. That's right. I have two disciples. They are called Tristan and Livia. Tristan is an extremely smart boy, so I'm proud of him. Livia has some circumstances, but she might become the reason for the territory's fast growth due to her background.'

When a woman's name was mentioned, Anna couldn't help but furrow her eyebrows. After all, this woman's background seemed to be quite exceptional for Noel to praise it that way.

Anna asked, "Father... Do you know any Livia in the Greenwood Kingdom? She must be someone famous."

"Huh?" Kevin was perplexed but tried to recall the name Livia. He continued, "I'm not sure about this, but the only famous Livia in the Greenwood Kingdom... is probably that person. Why do you ask?"

"Who?" Anna frowned.

"The second princess, Livia. She has a lot of achievements under her belt such as being a captain of a division in the Royal Guard or completing a lot of research. While she has stated that she has no desire to hold the throne, she is probably the most brilliant candidate. It could be said that she is the apple in the royal family's eyes."

"Is she beautiful?" Anna asked.

"Huh?" Kevin became even more confused before chuckling as though he realized what was going on. "Yeah. She is extremely beautiful, bright, and intelligent. You two are actually similar but in a different field. What's wrong? Is she helping Noel?"

"No. She has become his disciple." Anna looked a bit annoyed when she said it.

"Disciple..." Kevin thought for a moment. "Are you sure she has become his student? I don't think the royal family will be settled with just that."

Anna took a deep breath. Even without him mentioning it, Anna knew that the Greenwood Kingdom's royal family wouldn't be satisfied with just that. She was sure that Livia would make a move when Noel lowered his guard down.

On the one hand, she had been traveling and cooperating with Noel the whole time. While observing him, Noel didn't seem to have any interest in women, including her. On the other hand, Noel was about to become a noble.

While it was true that the noble's duty was to govern their territory, they also required a successor to lead the house in the future. And Livia must be aiming for it.

There was a weird feeling in Anna's heart. Because they had traveled together for a long time, she never put a lot of thought into it. But her heart felt unease about this Livia. It was different from Rose since this one had the achievement to stand by Noel's side. It appeared that she was about to be replaced.

'Is it because she is similar to me? Or is it because... she might replace me?' Anna didn't know how to describe her feelings.

"What's wrong? You look pale." Her father asked.

"I... am probably tired of putting that act. Please excuse me, Father." Anna bowed to him before leaving the room.

Kevin only smiled mysteriously as if understanding what his daughter was thinking.

Chapter 872 Realization

Bang!

Anna slammed the door closed while rushing to the windows. She didn't realize that she had crushed the paper in her hand.

As soon as she reached the edge of the window, she felt a bit more relaxed, finally grasping the whole situation.

"Wait... Did I just crush it?" Anna looked at the paper while rubbing her cheek. "Why was I that annoyed?"

Anna felt silent. On the one hand, it felt nauseating. On the other hand, she didn't understand the exact reason why she felt that way.

"Why did..." Anna paused, recounting everything that happened. And the reason was a simple letter. "Noel is just getting a few disciples. Is there anything wrong with it? Of course, I haven't taught anyone, and I don't think I should pass on my fighting skills just yet. However, Noel is different. He is teaching them runes. At the current stage, only Noel has a good understanding of runes, so it would be better to spread that knowledge."

Anna thought that Tristan and Livia were just something that would occur sooner or later.

She tried to recall the information about his disciples.

"Now that's weird... I don't think I have heard anything about Noel's disciples. In fact, Noel shouldn't have gotten any disciples in the previous life." Anna noticed something was wrong.

"Why does Noel want a student? That's because there will be people to help him in Rune Body. So, having a student means Noel can work on something else. It's just..."

Anna grabbed a piece of paper and wrote down a few words.

Rune Academy.

Students.

Rune Body.

Elite Soldiers.

"Noel wants to create Elite Soldiers reinforced by runes. In the past, those elite soldiers were known to be ferocious and unbeatable. A hundred of them could easily destroy an army of one thousand demons.

"After that achievement was spread, Runes became extremely popular to the point the nobles would lower their heads as long as Noel accepted them. And that was where the Rune Academy came from.

"Noel used the Rune Academy to build up his wealth and influence. If I'm not wrong, the entire northern area of the kingdom was within his control.

"However... not a single one of them mentioned anything about Noel's students. In fact, the one who taught them was Rose, who became the first director of the Rune Academy.

"In other words, where did these two people come from?"

Anna couldn't comprehend Noel's reason. On the one hand, she thought that having students would be necessary since it could take off Rose's burden. On the other hand, there seemed to be another reason.

"Tristan won't be able to do much because of his common background. But Princess Livia is different. She has the background, knowledge, and influence to do it... Does that mean Rose will be allocated to another position?

"Then again... Why would Noel..." Anna thought of something. "Don't tell me... Noel had never gone to the Greenwood Kingdom in the past. After all, his achievement was lacking compared to the current situation. So, he was stuck in the Demon Banner Army for a long time.

"But because I changed the course of history, Noel had the time to visit his grandfather... That's right. His grandfather was actually the tutor of the current king... It must be because of his influence that the Greenwood Kingdom took Noel seriously. They might have been aware of Noel's ancestry. Does that mean their Greenwood Royal Family wants Noel to return as royalty by marrying a princess?"

"And it's not just a normal princess..." Anna didn't know why, but she got annoyed once it reached Livia.

She couldn't help but remember the times with Noel. At every moment, Anna could lean her back on Noel, knowing that he would protect her. She then used her strength to protect him.

That was how they had survived this whole time. And their rivalry was so strong that they pushed each other forward.

But what would happen if everything changed? She was still Noel's ally. However, what if when she needed him, the one she met was Livia? What if Livia actually stopped him from talking to Noel?

What if Noel wanted her help, but Livia didn't allow him? That was probably the intention of the Royal Family. They wanted Livia to stop their interaction.

At the same time, another question appeared in her mind. Why would she be annoyed by that? She and Noel might be an ally, a friend, or a comrade, but there was nothing really going on between them.

Even with their relationship, it didn't change the fact that she was responsible for his parents' execution, even though they were actually fake. The people also knew that she had killed him and exiled him despite everything was his plan.

She had done all that. The people only knew that Noel and Anna saw each other as enemies. It didn't bother her before, but now that Livia came into the picture, she couldn't help but think, what if all those deeds were used against her?

"Why... why would I become this uncomfortable upon knowing that I can't be by his side anymore? Isn't it just returning to what was happening in the previous life? The only difference was the fact that Noel and I know that we are not enemies."

That was right. In her previous life, Noel always frustrated her by all the 'tortures' that she had been put through. However, everything changed in this life. She knew how kind Noel was, how reliable he could become, and everything he did for her.

"At first, I was just trying to change Noel so that he wouldn't kill me anymore. I wanted to show him that I had realized the mistakes of my previous life. So... since when..." Anna's expression turned serious. "...since when did I think Noel will always be there..."

It wasn't that weird for Anna to think that way. After all, in her previous life, Noel was always there to fight her. In her current life, Noel was there to support her.

It was because Noel was always by her side that she never thought she had taken the time they were together for granted.

That was right. There wasn't a single woman in Noel's life in the previous life. But now that everything had gone better, Noel could start thinking of having someone.

The thought that someone wasn't her somehow annoyed her.

"I..." Anna clutched her head. She wanted to say, 'I don't want anyone near him,' but stopped after realizing how ridiculous it was.

Yet, she wondered why that thought would appear in her mind.

They had experienced a lot of things together. The struggles they faced together, the problems they solved, or even the bickering they always had. They somehow put a smile on her face.

"I never thought about this before..." Anna muttered. "What if we won't be together anymore? What if our situation forces us to become enemies? No, I don't want that. Don't tell me... I want Noel?"

The only image that appeared in her mind was the little kiss she planted on his cheek back then. She asked him for another bet to tell their secret. But why would she do it? She could be more sincere by

lowering her head or kneeling on the ground. But why would she choose that action instead of everything else?

"I..." Anna's face reddened. She recalled all the times she got flustered from all Noel's actions. Back then, it was just Noel trying to trick her or annoy her. But if she didn't have any feelings for him, she wouldn't even react.

That was why Anna had realized something that had never appeared in her mind before. "I... like Noel."

Yes. Once she noticed that she had taken everything for granted, she could see everything more clearly. She had a feeling for Noel, but there was something else that buried that feeling.

It was guilt. She had done everything wrong in her previous life. Noel should be able to kill her in one way or another in the previous life; he just simply chose not to.

On the other hand, after gaining this rebirth, she forced Noel to change. She never tried to talk it out and just stopped Noel's every attempt until he changed. Even then, the one thing that changed him the most was the letter left behind by his father.

If he didn't know that everything was a lie, Noel might still try to kill her.

That was why an overwhelming guilt had buried her feelings this whole time with a thought, 'Do I really deserve him?'

"I am..." Anna hung her head low while uttering, "...so stupid. Why can't I realize this soon? I should have talked to him a lot. I..."

Anna gritted her teeth. She wanted to scold herself, but that would change nothing.

"Do I still have time to change it? Do I still have the opportunity to change it? Please... someone answer me..." Anna bit her lips. "I want to apologize to him. I want to talk to him about everything. I want to let him know that I like him. But is it too late?"

Chapter 873 Return

A few weeks later.

"Take this on, Grandfather." Noel smiled while waving both hands.

The black fire in both hands joined together and formed a huge phoenix. Unlike the previous Undying Phoenix, this one had more stability and energy in it.

Raincart was satisfied with the progress and clapped his hands. "Talk big, aren't you?"

A huge ice crystal appeared right beneath the phoenix, completely covering it. However, the phoenix refused to be frozen and spread its fire, melting the ice at an extreme rate.

But the ice crystal erupted once again, forming a giant crystal. The phoenix was supposed to have no chance of freeing itself.

However, the current Noel was different from what he was a few weeks ago.

"Rise." Noel twitched his finger up.

The phoenix rounded up and changed its shape to an egg. This created a hollow gap within the ice.

The egg cracked open and let out a second burst of fire that could only happen because of the hollow gap within the ice. This eruption was much stronger and broke the ice.

Still, as one would expect from Raincart, he reinforced the ice at the last minute. Ultimately, there was only one hole appearing on top of the ice crystal, releasing all that fire like a volcano.

"Tsk." Noel clicked his tongue. "As expected, I'm still not his match. To think that he would give a channel to vent all that explosion..."

"No, you should be proud of yourself that I have to be creative like that. You've got much stronger, Noel." Raincart was satisfied with his performance. A few weeks ago, there was no way Noel's phoenix could create a second eruption like that.

Despite having to teach Livia and Tristan, Noel used the rest of his time to have complete mastery over his fire.

"How is your progress? Have you mastered the fire?"

"I still feel that I have a long way to go." Noel shook his head.

Both of them began to walk toward each other. Raincart patted Noel's shoulders while saying, "That's good. Because it means you can get even stronger from now on. Although I can't directly help you anymore, just notify me if you need anything. Just like the others, you are my pride."

Noel wanted to tear up. Raincart had been the most caring grandfather in the past few weeks. He might be strict when training him, but he always took care of him after he was exhausted and even managed his time to get a proper rest.

He truly couldn't thank him enough.

"Grandfather. Come to my house once you have free time. I'm going to give you a big surprise."

"Is that so? I'm looking forward to it."

Noel lowered his head and said, "I know that this won't be enough to thank you, Grandfather. However, if you need anything from me, please don't hesitate to ask. I'll do my best to help you."

"Why are you being so sentimental? You are going to return to the Muivell Kingdom, right? Just go."

Noel straightened his back and nodded. "In that case, I will be going, Grandfather. Please take care."

"Yeah." Raincart waved his hand, watching Noel walk away. Tristan, Sandra, and Livia had been waiting for him along with the luggage. Because of Noel and Livia, they were being escorted by the Ezenholm Family, and the Royal Family had even secured the route.

Suddenly, a middle-aged man came to Raincart, saying, "It's sad that he is leaving now. You looked like you're enjoying your time with him, Father."

"Yeah. But he belongs to the other side... and I'm not going to selfishly restrict him in this place. Even the Muivell Kingdom isn't enough to contain him. So, let the bird... no, the dragon soars into the sky." Raincart glanced to the side. "Don't feel inferior. You have your own path, so stick with it."

"I understand. In that case, as the head of the Ezenholm Family, I shall escort him to the Muivell Kingdom."

"Oh? Such an important person is going to escort my grandson to the Muivell Kingdom?"

"What are you saying? I'm his uncle. Besides, he has given us a lot of things, so the least I can do is to ensure no harm can be done." I think you should take a look at

"Haha. Just go." Raincart chuckled. Although he wanted to escort him personally, he had enough fill in the past few weeks. It was better for someone else to do it. He could only look at the group while waving his hand until he couldn't see them anymore.

Still, he would be lying if he wasn't sad. Just like his son said, he had a great time with Noel. The feeling of having someone absorbing all the knowledge and putting it into practice was exhilarating, but it was time for them to part.

"If you don't know what to do as a noble, you can come to me... I know very well how hard it is to be a noble. Just keep moving forward; I know you can do it." Raincart closed his eyes, recalling all the memories he had with Noel. He said, "Leysha has given birth to a good kid."

Noel also regretted that he couldn't stay any longer. There were a lot of things he wanted to talk about with his grandfather. His techniques might be better, but he was still not satisfied with the current progress.

However, there was an even more important matter in the Muivell Kingdom. He had finally taken the first step in order to regain everything back.

He returned for the sake of becoming a noble.

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The journey took three days.

Since they had almost arrived in Noel's homeland, Noel's students started to get anxious. Tristan and Sandra remained silent, but they were holding each other's hand, wondering if they would have to go through the same thing as the one in the Atracaeca Kingdom.

On the other hand, Livia managed to remain a bit calmer and asked about what would happen as soon as they reached the Muivell Kingdom. "Teacher. Where are we going to go after this?"

Noel thought it was normal for Livia to be worried, considering he wasn't a noble yet. Without any place, she might have to consider their condition.

"No need to worry. You all are going to stay with Dimitri later. But for now, I'm going back to the Demon Relief Squad."

"Demon Relief Squad? Didn't you say that you're going to become a noble with a different squad?"

"Yeah. But the Demon Relief Squad had been taking care of me this whole time. While I couldn't repay their kindness, I would at least thank them for taking care of me. Only after that will I go with the Demon Hunting Squad... They should have been waiting for me." Noel explained.

"I see. Where will we meet Dimitri then?"

"Ah, that. You will find out soon." Noel chuckled. "In any case, it's not going to take too long. We should be able to move to our new home in about two weeks."

"I understand." Livia nodded with a serious expression.

"I just want to tell you a few things. First of all, I'm going to protect you to the best of my ability, but I'm sure that the enemies are going to come at me. There will be a lot of strong people, so I'm afraid that my hands will be occupied."

"No need to worry, Teacher. My Father has told me that he will be dispatching Damian to stand by right outside the boulder. Although he can't enter the kingdom, I should be safe as soon as I leave the territory."

Noel nodded in agreement. "And this is the second thing. As my student, I'm not going to treat you differently from Tristan, no matter your background. However, I can assure you that I'll give you all the knowledge about runes. Just remember our agreement."

"I know."

"Then, you are going to be helping me with the Rune Body. So, you might end up—" Noel paused for a moment, unsure whether he should tell this or not. After all, a princess having to look at the knight's naked body could be considered vulgar.

However, Livia actually chuckled. "You don't have to worry about that. I have seen plenty of knights due to my position. I might need some time to get used to it, but I'm also curious about the effect of this so-called Rune Body."

"Good." Noel was satisfied with her response before raising a finger. "One last thing. Since there will be a lot of future cooperation between me and your country, you'll be handling most of the stuff."

"Understood. Leave it to me." Livia nodded without hesitation.

"Alright then." Noel waved his hand, noticing that they were near the border. He took a peek outside and saw the border with a man standing right before them.

As soon as their gaze met, the man bowed his head and said, "Welcome back, Master."

Noel couldn't contain his smile and waved his hand. "I'm back, Dimitri."

Chapter 874 Demon Relief Squad

Demon Relief Squad.

"I heard that he's coming back." Stella nonchalantly said, informing them of the news she got from their captain.

"Is that so?" Paul looked down. His expression darkened a little.

"Why is your face like that, Paul? You don't want him back?" Stella asked.

"It's not that." Paul shook his head helplessly, recalling what had happened in the past year. "Just take a look at that kid, the last time he was with us was... what? Almost a year ago?"

"Yeah. It was almost a year. At first, we were resting due to the ambush of the Supreme Devil Organization. He was gone for a few months before going again." Ben nodded, remembering the details.

"That's why I'm annoyed. Once he returns, he's going to become a noble, right? And more importantly, he is becoming a noble under the banner of the Demon Hunting Army. If he wants to become a noble, why don't the Demon Relief Squad? I'll immediately give him my position as the vice captain." Paul sighed. "Are we that unreliable?"

All of them didn't understand much about the situation. However, there was one person who should understand Noel's plan in this room. So, all their gazes turned to that person.

Rose maintained her calm face while explaining, "The big reason is that Igor owes him. You should remember that bet, right? And since Captain Igor is going to choose a successor, he is using that opportunity to sneak in to become a Captain to get a higher rank."

"Still, why would he choose them? I can understand the higher rank, but does he have that little feeling for us? Even after everything we've done together?"

"It's not that. I believe he doesn't want to harm any of you. After all, having to relinquish one's position will cause a backlash to that squad. So, he doesn't want our squad to receive the backlash... He believes that this squad can reach a higher place even without the fame he brings." Rose explained carefully.

"Our squad, huh?" Stella looked at Rose. "You are going to leave the squad as well, right, Rose?"

Rose closed her eyes with a pained look. However, she couldn't deny it because she had promised Noel that she would follow him as his vassal.

"I guess I will be the only girl in the zero squad." Stella sighed. "And we will have to fill up the hole that Rose will leave behind... right after we've gotten used to not having Noel."

That was right. After the rest, they returned to their duty. It was a bit hard to get used to not having Noel, but in the end, they returned to their previous state before Anna and Noel came to this group.

However, Rose, the original member of the squad, would leave the group soon, meaning that they would be lacking someone of Rose's caliber. It would severely weaken the group, considering Rose was their brain and observer.

"Uh, more work." Jonathan hung his head low. His gloomy aura started to become even darker as though all hope had been lost.

"Is the captain fine with it?" Zion asked Paul.

"She has given her recommendation."

"Oh!" Zion thought for a moment. "Should we bring up someone from the First or Second Squad? Or do we have any promising rookie this time around?"

"If you're searching for Anna or Noel's caliber, then none." Stella shook her head. "I'm not sure about picking any random person to fill up the gap."

"Actually, I have been in contact with someone. I believe he can fill the gap I'll leave behind. At the very least, I don't want to cause more problems than necessary when leaving this squad. And I'm sorry for my selfish action and my lord's situation." Rose politely lowered her head. She even called Noel her master to show that she was already a part of the new Ardagan Family.

If they said they weren't angry about Noel and Rose's departures, they would be lying. However, they had prepared about this at some point, considering Noel had told them that the Demon Relief Squad would be a stepping stone for him to become a noble.

However, the memory and experience together couldn't help but become their frustration. They wished Noel could stay with them longer.

However, the gloomy atmosphere in the room was suddenly interrupted by a loud slapping sound.

Slap!

"!!!" Everyone instinctively turned their gaze to the source of the noise, finding Paul was the culprit. It turned out Paul slapped his own cheeks as if trying to pump himself.

His eyes were more determined as he stated, "That doesn't matter anymore. If you want to leave, then leave. No one is holding you back. Besides, he has done enough for the squad and the Demon Banner Army. I'll take care of the group to ensure that the Demon Relief Squad remains as the top five squad."

"Reliable, aren't you, Vice Captain?" Ben whistled.

Just seeing his determination made Rose more guilty.

As if understanding her concern, Paul placed his hand on her shoulder. "Rose. This is my last order as the vice captain of the Demon Relief Squad. If you're going to walk across this new path, make sure you go big. I don't allow you to be mediocre."

"Paul..." Rose shuddered.

Stella couldn't help but chuckle. "That one was great, Paul. That's right. If you're going to become a noble's assistant, make sure Noel becomes big."

"Shut those people up and make us proud." Zion nodded in agreement.

"Yeah. I hope that in the future, I can say, 'Look! Aren't my teammates amazing?' or something like that." Ben smiled.

"You guys..." Rose opened her mouth, but words refused to come out. Her teammates were amazing. Despite her selfish actions, these guys still encouraged her. "Thank you... I'm glad that I'm a part of the Demon Relief Squad. If you guys need anything in the future, don't hesitate to send me a message. I'll do my best to help you guys!"

"Talk big, aren't you?" Stella smirked, teasing her. But before Rose could reply, Stella had hugged Rose. Because of the same gender, Stella and Rose's rivalry was quite high in the group. But Stella dropped everything and just hugged her like a best friend. "Good luck, Rose. It will be hard without you, but we will manage."

"Uhm." Rose could only mumble while nodding her head. She wanted to cry.

"That's right. You don't have to worry about us." Ben gave a thumbs-up before pointing at Jonathan. "We can overwork Jonathan to get rid of his gloominess."

"Why me?" Jonathan rolled his eyes.

The group only chuckled as Paul said one last thing. "That's right. I think this is the most important. Before he officially becomes a noble, let me punch Noel once. How dare he disappear for almost a year."

"Haha." Rose chuckled. "You could say it to him directly. After all, he should be arriving soon or he might already meet the captain."

"Is that so?"

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As Rose said, Noel had arrived at the Demon Relief Squad's headquarters. After leaving Tristan, Sandra, and Livia to Dimitri, he immediately rushed to the Demon Relief Squad.

Clara looked at him coldly. "So, the famous Noel Ardagan has the heart to come back?"

"Ahaha..." Noel scratched the back of his head. "Please don't say it that way, Captain Clara."

"Alright, alright, Captain Noel. How can I be rude to another squad's captain." Clara shrugged.

"..." Noel didn't know what to say. After all, he had asked a lot from Clara despite leaving the squad.

However, his expression turned serious as soon as he replied, "I won't forget everything I learned here. I come here to thank you for everything you've done. If the Demon Relief Squad ever comes to my territory, I will definitely treat them as my esteemed guests."

Without hesitation, Noel lowered his head, showing the weight of his gratitude. "Thank you, Captain."

After getting confronted by Noel's sincere gratitude, even Clara knew that she was just acting like a child. She rubbed her cheek embarrassedly before saying, "I haven't done much for you. I could only

help you with the recommendation. The one who you should thank is not me but the zero squad. You're going to meet them after this, right?"

"Yeah. Although I don't have a lot of time left, I will meet them." Noel confirmed it without hesitation.

"That's good. You don't have to waste your time with me here and talk with them instead." Clara waved her hand. "Besides, I should be the one thanking you for killing one of the Devil Saints."

Noel nodded in understanding before walking to the door.

Before he exited, Clara said, "There is one thing you need to know. Just like you said, your territory is open for us. We're the same. If you ever need our help, don't hesitate to send a request. We'll help you build everything you want... after all, your territory is extremely dangerous. See you soon, Earl Noel."

Noel didn't turn around, but a smile formed on his face. There was no need for parting words. This was the end of the relationship between a captain and her subordinate. But this was also the beginning of their new relationship between a captain and an earl.

Chapter 875 Leaving The Demon Relief Squad

"Heh, it seems that someone finally knows how to come back." Stella smirked. Even though her words were sharp, her tone was that of teasing.

"Ahaha..." Noel rubbed his cheek embarrassedly. It wasn't that he forgot about them. He simply had a lot of things to do in order to protect himself.

"We've heard about it. It seems that you are going to become an Earl." Ben waved his hands. After talking to Rose, he had grown used to this problem. At the same time, their bond with Rose was far longer than Noel's, so Noel leaving might be sad, but it wasn't unbearable.

"Yes. I believe everything has been set up perfectly, so I should receive that title."

"Isn't it amazing? A captain usually only gets the Count Position. But you get one rank higher..." Zion nodded in approval.

"Well, we might not be able to talk to you casually anymore." Stella looked sad even though she just loved to tease him.

"You don't have to be formal with me." Noel chuckled. "Though, this might be the last time I can see all of you like this."

Paul patted Noel's shoulder. "We're aware of your situation, and your life as an Earl would become even more dangerous, so please be careful. We'll be fine over here."

"Thank you. Sorry that I didn't talk to you about my plan. I couldn't afford to have a lot of people know about this plan, or the Royal Family would notice and prepare another plan against it."

"It's fine. Just take care of Rose for us."

"Of course."

Surprisingly, there weren't a lot of things to talk about. There were some parting words, but they felt it wasn't really a parting.

Noel had even emphasized that he might need their strength sooner or later. So, they would meet each other from time to time.

Rose had explained everything to them, so the squad fully understood Noel's situation and plan.

"Still, I'm quite curious about what happened to you in this one year. It seems that you have become a Spirit Grandmaster." Paul looked at Noel up and down, examining his strength.

"Yeah. I became one not long ago." Noel nodded with a serious expression. "I can finally understand why the Spirit Grandmaster becomes the biggest transition stage."

They knew that Noel could defeat Peak Level Demons easily when he was a Spirit Master. So, there was no doubt that Noel could challenge a Superior Demon once he reached this stage.

That was why Stella couldn't help but say playfully, "That's right. Paul wants to hit you once before you become a noble."

"Wha—" Paul was startled and hurriedly explained, "What are you saying? I was just—"

"I understand." Stella stopped Paul with a few nods as though she knew what he wanted to say.

Noel chuckled. "Hahaha."

"By the way, I'm quite curious about what happened... What kind of struggles have you gone through this whole year?" Rose asked. As his vassal, she was curious about his experience, thinking this would allow her to understand her lord better.

"I don't have a lot of time, but I think I can briefly tell you about my story. If you don't mind, that is..." Noel calculated the time and agreed with Rose.

Surprisingly, Stella swiftly retreated and picked up a chair for Noel, saying, "Here you go."

"..." Noel was speechless, but the others only laughed it out.

Ultimately, he told them about how he ventured deep into the Demon Territory. It was a thrilling experience where one wrong move would spell his doom.

At the same time, they were surprised to know that Anna was there with him alongside the Greenwood Kingdom. It was a combination no one had expected.

However, when Noel showed them what he had learned from Old Ru, they were stunned.

On the one hand, Noel wanted to show them about the Rune Body and even drew it on their bodies. On the other hand, the time wasn't appropriate. It would be better for his students to do it since it would increase their experience and knowledge about runes.

After Old Ru, Noel began recounting the experience in the Atracaeca Kingdom. They were surprised that Noel was chased by two Devil Saints and felt sorry that they couldn't be with him at that time.

More importantly, they were annoyed when the second prince extorted Noel just for the sake of simple cooperation.

Unfortunately, Noel couldn't really tell them about what could lead him to become an earl or how he chose his territory. After all, the Royal Family might realize his intention and change their approach in order to ruin him.

After talking for more than three hours, Noel finally bid goodbye to the rest of the team. This time, he was accompanied by Rose as they were about to head to the capital.

Clara, Paul, and the rest of the zero squad stood in front of the gate, watching them disappear into the horizon.

...

Capital City.

Not long after a celebration of the birth of the strongest and youngest Arbiter in the Muivell Kingdom's history, the city was shaken once again by the inauguration of Noel Ardagan.

They had released the information about the youngest and strongest Captain whose achievement was beyond that of Anna's Stargaze.

Anna might become the youngest Spirit Grandmaster and have that undeniable strength. However, Noel wasn't losing. He might be late by a few months, but his speed wasn't that far from Anna. More

importantly, Noel had two spirits, unlike Anna. In addition, Noel was known to be a lazy person who never trained his body before getting exiled to the Demon Banner Army.

It could be said that in terms of speed, it was a draw.

Of course, they had never seen Noel fight personally. Meanwhile, they had witnessed Anna's undeniable strength and defeated an Arbiter that had reigned for a few decades.

Unexpectedly, they were shocked when they heard Noel's achievement. As the founder of Rune System as well as killing a Devil Saint, no one could say anything that he was given the noble title.

And the most ridiculous thing they heard was that Noel was given the Earl Title, surpassing his father in one go. Because of his personal history, it was clear that Noel had surpassed his father.

Still, there was a doubt in their mind. Luke Ardagan was known to be the wealthiest and kindest person who donated a lot of his wealth to the people while remaining the richest. On the other hand, Noel reached this position with his strength. There were some rumors stating that Noel had the potential to become a tyrant.

Despite Kevin's efforts to release some good rumors about Noel's deeds and achievements, he couldn't defeat the Royal Family. They spread the rumors about Noel's strength, causing their decision to look right in the people's eyes.

There was a chance that Noel would become a tyrant and cause instability in the kingdom. Hence, the Royal Family rewarded him or, more like, exiled him to the border where he would be targeted by them, the demons, and the Supreme Devil Organization.

The royal family had given their stance, stopping Noel Ardagan from growing.

The other nobles didn't know what they should do. They wanted to meet this incredible young man, but they were aware that their action might cause the Royal Family to eliminate them as well.

Still, for normal people, what they cared about was the fact that Noel was going to become an Earl as well as his achievement.

They fully understood how Noel could become a noble.

There was another festival created to greet Noel. They couldn't help but wonder how the lazy person changed into a god-like figure in common people's eyes.

They didn't realize that Noel had entered the capital without anyone knowing. Just like any other person, he entered without flaunting his status.

No one would realize it was him even without a disguise.

After a long journey, Noel could finally step inside the capital city without disguise.

Kevin offered him a place to stay, but because of Anna's situation, Noel had decided to stay independent to avoid revealing their plan.

Rose was the one handling everything like his clothes and appearance, so that no one could look down on him.

Unfortunately, due to his plan, the Demon Hunting Squad couldn't accompany him since the only thing they would attract from people was ridicule.

...

Thirty days after the announcement, it was time for Noel to make his entrance.

"You look good." Rose smiled, appreciating the young man before her. She gave a thumbs up while continuing, "You'll definitely stun everyone. Go out there and show that you are the head of the new Ardagan Family."

Noel smiled. "I know that I'm still lacking as a lord, but thank you for accompanying me this far, Rose."

"Hahaha. I, too, don't have any experience in governing a city. So, we're the same." Rose politely bowed his head. "I hope the fortune blesses you with its presence, my lord."

With a determined face, Noel replied, "Yeah. I'm going."

Chapter 876 Earl Ardagan

In the heart of the royal palace, hidden behind towering stone walls was the grand throne. The person who sat on it was none other than the current king, Oliver De Lenfenth.

He looked down upon the people who had been standing on the two sides of the hall. Due to the tradition, there were a lot of nobles in the Muivell Kingdom.

They had gotten used to seeing someone becoming a noble after their service in the army. That was why this grand hall was usually desolate despite the occasion. All nobles had been invited, but those who came usually wanted to assess, befriend, or hinder the new noble.

Yet, today was like none other. The desolate grand hall was brimming with people. All were standing near the red carpet that led directly to the throne.

They had been invited, and surprisingly, most of the nobles in the kingdom decided to attend. After all, they had heard the name of the noble.

Noel Ardagan. This name had shaken the entire kingdom, not only with his achievement in rune but also his strength. It was undeniable that he would become a great figure in the future.

The anticipation among the gathered nobles was palpable. Their silk and satin garments rustled softly as they exchanged whispers.

Elegantly dressed women adorned in jewels whispered secrets behind delicate fans, while distinguished men adjusted the cuffs of their finely tailored coats.

Their intention was clear. To approach the new noble, the first impression was important.

"Are we really going to see that person?" asked one of the young women.

"That's possible. I wonder what kind of a hero he is."

"From the lazy noble to a grand hero, huh..."

The nobles brought their children, mostly young women for one big reason. Even Dimitri had mentioned it.

Despite his achievement, Noel had yet to have someone beside him. It would become a problem sooner or later. And those greedy nobles would definitely prey upon him.

As the minute passed, the anticipation mounted.

"Demon Hunting Squad's Captain Noel Ardagan is entering the hall!"

As the announcement from the soldiers echoed inside the grand hall. All sounds ceased as though the grand hall was holding its breath.

With a resonant creak, the bronze doors began to swing inward, revealing the person everyone had been waiting for.

Stepping into the grand room was a figure of unparalleled presence. Draped in robes of pitch black, trimmed with threads of gold. The black hair felt like it was flowing down the robe and eventually reached the ground like a river of silk as he walked.

His pair of gentle eyes carried both the fierceness of his strength and the deepness of his wisdom. The serene expression made him look aloof and dignified.

The young man, who could do nothing but fear his death after getting exiled to the Demon Banner Army, finally returned to the court with his achievements in tow.

The black military clothes matched perfectly with the black sword hanging on his waist. Ardagan's bright red jade caused a glint on the inner side of the robe.

Noel Ardagan had finally returned. Despite his thin stature, not a single of the strong men gathered in the room would dare to look down upon him.

A hush fell over the room as the figure continued forward, his footsteps echoing on the marble floor.

The only sound was the soft, rhythmic chiming of the jewels that adorned their attire. Not a single person could believe that this was the rumored Noel Ardagan.

Who was Noel Ardagan? They had heard of his name in the past. He was the son of Luke Ardagan, but the reason for his popularity was that he was known to have the opposite personality of his father. It was said that the Ardagan Family would decline if Noel Ardagan succeeded the house.

Yet, who could expect that infamous person would stand here and take everyone's breath away?

"So, he is Noel Ardagan..." A person muttered in a low voice. He was one of the few people who could react. He was none other than the Fire Arbiter, the one who observed Anna's fight. She didn't know why, but he felt a sense of suppression when looking at him.

"Interesting." The Sword Arbiter couldn't help but smirk. Anna was good, but there was something different from Noel. And he could feel it.

Kevin smiled gratified. He was staring at Noel as though he was his own child. 'This is something you deserve. Good job in facing all the struggles.'

"Noel Ardagan, huh?" The Void Arbiter maintained her calm expression. He was extraordinary, but he didn't know how he was compared to Anna. That was why she glanced at Anna, wondering what kind of reaction she would make after knowing that the person who should have died in her hand actually survived.

Anna didn't say anything, but her expression was extremely cold. It was as if she wanted to kill him right here. I think you should take a look at

Upon reaching his position, Noel solemnly fell on one knee, lowering his head. "Glory to the Muivell Kingdom."

The king frowned. The Ardagan Family was truly resilient. He thought he had destroyed them, but it wasn't enough.

Unfortunately, there was nothing he could do. If he didn't adhere to the tradition, he would lose the favor of the nobles.

He stood up and waved his hand, signaling to the minister next to him.

The minister opened up the scroll and stated, "Noel Ardagan has served in the Demon Banner Army for three years. During his service, he completed one expedition, ruined the plan of the Supreme Devil Organization multiple times, and killed one Devil Saint.

"He has become the founder of the Rune System, bringing glory to the Muivell Kingdom."

Noel lowered his head and shouted, "I serve the country. I shall create the Rune Academy in my territory so that our country can become stronger and more advanced compared to other countries."

"!!!" The people couldn't help but widen their eyes. Those words were what they had been waiting for. They were wondering how the Royal Family stole the rune system from Noel, but before they could do that, Noel announced that he would let everyone learn it. This way, the Royal Family would look like a tyrant if they forcefully retrieved the knowledge from Noel.

It seemed that Noel wasn't that oblivious to politics.

The minister couldn't help but glance at the king, wondering what he should do.

The king waved his hand. Since there was nothing they could do, it was better to continue.

"We're thankful for the contribution of Noel Ardagan." The minister paused for a moment. "There are eight people who recommend him to become a noble: Commander Oscar, Captain Shale, Captain Milfa, Captain Clara, Captain Septa, Water Lord Azel, Stone Lord Runth, and Fleeting Arbiter Kevin Stargaze."

"Due to all his achievements, the kingdom has decided to reward him with the rank of Earl as well as the territory of Lounstein. I hope that Earl Noel Ardagan can use his power to bring peace to the kingdom."

Hiss!

The people had just realized the royal family's intention. It wasn't a reward. Lounstein was one of the most dangerous places the kingdom currently had. Even bandits didn't want to stay there.

In other words, the Royal Family was hell-bent on exiling Noel.

The king stepped forth and asked, "Noel Ardagan. Do you solemnly swear that you will be loyal?"

'What loyal?'

'There is no way I'm going to be loyal if you are going to exile me.'

Most of them had the same thought. To think that the king dared to use such a phrase to Noel. It might be due to his inexperience that the king tried to trip Noel.

However, Noel wasn't that foolish anymore, especially after learning from Raincart.

He declared, "I, Noel Ardagan, solemnly swear that I will use all my strength for the country. I will use my wisdom to raise the country so that no one will look down on our country. I shall put my life on the line for the sake of the country."

Noel kept emphasizing 'the country' in his words. It was a declaration that he wouldn't be loyal to the royal family.

The king's face remained calm, but his heart was already distorted. Sadly for him, with all those promises from Noel, he couldn't force his loyalty.

He announced out loud, "From today onward, Noel Ardagan shall become the Earl of the kingdom!"

"Long live Your Majesty, Long live the Muivell Kingdom!" Noel replied.

A round of applause shook the entire hall. This was a man who had overcome all odds and finally got everything he had today.

It wasn't because of the Ardagan Family. He was the only reason. Not a single person would expect that the infamous Noel Ardagan would be one of the most talented people in the kingdom. They couldn't help but imagine what would happen if Noel Ardagan started his training at the same time as Anna.

Anna might have to give the talent as the most talented to Noel.

However, this was just the first step Noel took as a noble.

Chapter 877 Banquet

"Earl Ardagan, please nice to meet you. I'm Count Hareven." A middle-aged man approached Noel with a gentle smile. Next to him was a young woman. With long pink hair running smoothly like that of silk, she gave off the vibe of a gentle and graceful person. She politely lowered her head while lifting her skirt, greeting Noel as the middle-aged man introduced her. "I and my daughter, Ruby, would like to congratulate you."

"Thank you very much, Count Hareven." Noel nodded with a smile. "Since we both are lords in the north, there will be a lot of opportunities for us to talk in the future."

Noel maintained a polite but distant approach. This way, he didn't turn anyone down, but he did not choose any of them.

After getting his title, they had a little banquet to celebrate his achievement. And a lot of people took this opportunity to approach Noel for one reason or another.

The king had left the party, so the pressure on these nobles' shoulders lessened quite a bit. Even if the king wanted to harm Noel, he had to do it carefully, so there was no problem with them taking a bite of what Noel had before that.

While he was greeting the people, Kevin came to him while extending his hand. "Congratulations, Noel."

"Thank you." Noel smiled. "It's thanks to you that I'm able to reach this far."

"What are you talking about? I haven't done anything for you except recommending that position. Everything is due to your abilities. But... I have to apologize for one thing..." Kevin made a wry smile while glancing at the side, where his daughter was located.

The others who watched their interactions couldn't help but understand the circumstances. Because Kevin was Luke Ardagan's friend, he wanted to take care of the problems in their family by helping Noel. On the other hand, his own daughter was adamant about killing Noel.

As the head of the Stargaze Family, he had to choose Noel or Anna.

"Well, today, you are the star. So, I won't be holding anyone back from meeting you. If you need anything, feel free to talk to me."

"Yes." Noel nodded with a smile. As Kevin walked away, more and more nobles approached Noel.

On the side, Anna was watching Noel with a cold gaze. If a glare was enough to kill someone, Noel might have died multiple times.

Not a single noble dared to approach her due to her aura. They felt they would get into trouble if they even bothered her.

After all, Anna was supposed to be the sole pride of the Muivell Kingdom, and Noel should have died a long time ago. But everything has changed right now.

Anna might have all the talents and extraordinary abilities, but Noel's achievement made her strength pale in comparison.

After all, they might need a powerful strength, but if the other party had the same strength along with a lot of contributions to the kingdom, it was clear who would people choose.

That was why they understood if Anna wanted to crush Noel.

What they didn't know was that Anna was annoyed by another thing.

She had been crossing her arms while gnashing her teeth, thinking, 'He is in the limelight. I should be happy about this, but why am I getting annoyed? If I have been more honest, can I stand there?'

'But if I stand there right now, everything would be a mess. They know that we've been cooperating. But because I can't be there, I have to watch all those women flocking around him.'

She was lamenting the fact that despite being the closest one to Noel in this room, she had no chance of meeting him.

More importantly, she couldn't help but wonder if she had been more open to Noel and realized her feelings, would Noel change his plan?

Unfortunately, no matter how hard she thought about it, there would be nothing she could do to change the current situation.

Noel kept entertaining other nobles. Even he felt a bit suffocated when acting all this polite to them. Still, he was just trying to remember these people's names, thinking that there would be a few people worth cooperating with.

Noel didn't plan to just govern the territory well. He wanted to make his Ardagan Family the ruler in the north. This was the only way to stop the royal family and their allies.

Unexpectedly, the guests weren't limited to nobles.

After he talked to another Earl, the Sword Arbiter came to him with a gentle face. "To think that I would have an opportunity to meet a man like you."

"It's my honor to meet the famous Sword Arbiter." Noel smiled.

With just a glance from the Sword Arbiter, Noel could feel that his gaze was trying to slice him open.

'So, this is the pinnacle of the sword in this kingdom...' Noel thought. As someone younger and more inexperienced, Noel was the first to extend his hand. "I'm Noel Ardagan. It's truly an honor meeting you here, Sir."

The Sword Arbiter shook his hand nonchalantly, but he was a bit surprised when he received a firm handshake.

"!!!" The Sword Arbiter couldn't help but look at their hands. While he wasn't releasing his power, the aura that he had gained after honing his sword would feel like they were being stabbed. Yet, Noel actually extended his hand and gave a firm handshake.

He was either neutralizing his aura or ignoring it.

His surprise had yet to end. Not only did Noel disregard his power, but he also attacked him.

The Spiritual Energy in his body started disorientating when their hands joined together. It was as if Noel was the one controlling this power. In addition, he could feel his body become warmer due to that flow.

The Sword Arbiter hurriedly gained back control of his Spiritual Energy and smiled, not feeling offended at all. He asked, "It seems that your path is not entirely on the sword, correct?"

"If that's not the case, how could I even bring out the runes?" Noel shook his head completely. "Your path might be straight, but it's narrow. On the other hand, my path might have a lot of turns and junctions, but who says there is only one path to reach our destination?"

The Sword Arbiter nodded in agreement. "Indeed. People often think that a single, straightforward path will be the best. But that doesn't mean having other paths is bad. I can finally understand why you can reach this far. If there is an opportunity, how about inviting me for tea?"

There was only one meaning for the tea in his mouth. The Sword Arbiter seemed to be eager to fight him. This also showed that he had acknowledged him.

"Thank you. If Sir is not busy, I would definitely invite you over for tea. I hope that Sir doesn't mind the quality."

From the simple interaction alone, he realized that Noel wasn't an ordinary person. However, he still couldn't see the fact that getting this new territory was actually Noel's idea.

He patted Noel's shoulder and walked away after leaving a single message. "Be careful of your back. I just hope that the Muivell Kingdom has a bright future ahead."

Noel politely nodded to him. Despite his loyalty to the Royal Family, the Sword Arbiter still wished for the best for the Muivell Kingdom.

Noel could respect that opinion. There were a few other important people that approached him, such as the Fire Arbiter. However, most of the time, they approached him for either the runes or his marriage.

If they managed to marry their daughter, there was no way Noel would be stingy. And they couldn't help but wonder when the Rune Academy would start operating.

This Rune Academy was actually Noel's plan to buy some time. Since the academy would have a lot of noble children, the Royal Family couldn't easily seize it or destroy the Ardagan Family. At the same time, he couldn't stall the opening for that long either as there would be more and more pressure.

Because he rarely attended a banquet like this, he didn't realize how tired his father was. And he had to continue governing the territory after all this.

Fortunately, Noel had practiced a bit with his grandfather during his stay in the Greenwood Kingdom.

After talking to more than forty nobles, the banquet finally came to a close. The noble was slightly disappointed that Noel showed no favoritism to their daughters, but that also meant the door was still open. More importantly, they had Noel's words that the academy would be opening soon.

So they better prepare their children to attend it. Not only would it be good to form a connection, but also to know Noel a bit further.

They were happy with this Rune Academy because Noel had told them that the runes didn't necessarily need to have a Spirit. This meant their less talented children could become as strong as the talented ones. Of course, they still needed Spiritual Energy control or the Demon Crystals to build up their energy reserve, but all those stuff were minor problems for nobles.

With all these nobles, Noel should have bought enough time for one year. He planned to use this one year to stabilize his new territory and explore the entire region.

But when he was about to exit the royal castle and take some rest before heading to his new territory, he was stopped by a person.

The pent-up frustration had clearly taken over her as she was looking at Noel with a cold gaze.

Yes, this person was none other than Anna.

Chapter 878 Evil Plan?

"Well, well, well..." Anna walked toward Noel while saying, "It seems that our little hero manages to become a big guy, huh?"

Noel's expression became cold as he said, "Thanks to you."

Anna stopped right in front of Noel, her face was only a few centimeters away from his face. She said, "This is not over. We will see how long you can survive."

"No matter what you do, I will continue to survive. Instead, I'll give you a piece of advice now. You should actually beg for my forgiveness, and I might actually forgive you. It's better to give up early." Noel harrumphed.

Their interactions were watched by many. They had their individual opinions about Anna and Noel, but it was clear that they were pretty interested to know what would happen next.

Since the party was over, there was no need for Anna to hold back. Spiritual Energy began to leak out of their bodies, and the pressure started to build up.

The intensity of their energy made the nobles think that these two might clash right in front of the palace. They had known Anna's strength, but Noel's achievement showed that his strength was comparable to hers.

That was why they actually wanted them to determine who was stronger.

But before they could release their full power, the Void Arbiter appeared next to them.

"How interesting... To think that two geniuses of the kingdom want to fight... Don't forget that you are right in front of the palace."

"Teacher?" Anna looked surprised, while Noel remained indifferent. "How about you? You're the one using your ability right now."

"I'm using an ability as an arbiter in order to stop you two from fighting."

Noel and Josephine glared at each other. Noel knew that Josephine was the one who brainwashed Anna. It could be said that she was the cause of everything.

"What fighting? We're not fighting. You're the one interpreting it as a fight. Maybe... the only thing in your brain is violent? What a brute." Noel shook his head helplessly.

"You're pretty twisted for a kid, aren't you?" Josephine was a bit annoyed, but she managed to restrain herself. She continued, "How about you then? You're just relying on someone to give their position to you instead of earning it yourself."

"Giving me their position? Please don't make up things. I earned it. If you can't even get your facts right, then please don't open that mouth of yours. Other than lies and nonsense, what can you actually say?" Noel chuckled.

Josephine's eyebrows twitched while Anna suddenly stepped forward and said, "You should have some respect for your elder."

"Respect is earned, not granted. That's why you're still a kid compared to me." Noel laughed while turning around. "I don't want to waste my time with two girls."

Anna and Josephine wanted to say something, but they realized that Noel had all sorts of replies to shut them up. Ultimately, they chose to remain silent until Noel disappeared into the crowd.

"..." Anna fell silent for a while as though she was thinking about something. "Teacher..."

"What?" Josephine replied with a slightly annoyed tone.

"I will be moving into his territory."

"Huh?" Josephine instantly became confused. If she didn't know her students better, she would have assumed that Anna wanted Noel. But she was the masterpiece she had created, so Josephine knew that Anna wanted his life instead.

"By moving into his territory, I can monitor all his movements and hinder his progress. Besides, even if he doesn't like me, he can't stop me, an Arbiter, from staying."

"So, you're planning to move to his territory with the excuse of helping him?"

"Yeah. When there is a chance..." Anna smirked evilly.

Josephine fully understood what Anna wanted to say. Since Anna would be there, it meant that Noel would have a hard time. Obviously, Noel would like to get rid of Anna. However, expelling her from his territory was practically impossible due to the fact that Anna was an Arbiter sent by the kingdom to 'help' Noel.

Of course, Josephine or another arbiter could do it as well. However, it would make Anna look like she had lost against Noel.

In other words, the only way Noel could get rid of Anna was by killing her. But this would give the excuse for the Royal Family to punish Noel and exert all their forces to destroy him. With both of them dying, the Royal Family could seize back control and eliminate the variables. In addition, Noel had runes, while Anna had those weird abilities. So they could get it after investigating their background for a while.

Meanwhile, Anna would try to kill Noel in one way or another. Even if she couldn't, she could force him to use his money to do useless things with the excuse of helping.

If she couldn't kill Noel, she could at least burn his money and hinder his progress.

Annoying Noel was quite a sweet plan in Josephine's mind.

"Let me confirm this. You should know that his territory is dangerous, right?"

"I know. That's why I suggest it. Now that it has reached this point, why don't I force him to go out and meet those dangerous monsters? When he is heavily injured, I think you know what to do." Anna nodded with a serious expression.

"Seriously injured..." Josephine could deliver the killing blow. In fact, the Supreme Devil Organization would use that information to ambush him.

It was indeed a good plan in her head. She considered the pros and cons for a minute before saying, "Alright. I will handle the Royal Family and Supreme Devil Organization. I'll definitely make the Royal Family support you and stop the Supreme Devil Organization from harming you."

"Thank you, Teacher." Anna politely bowed to her teacher. "I'm thinking about getting all my luggage right now and heading straight to his territory."

"You're not going to wait for a few more days?"

"No. It's better to reach his territory first. I can survey the area and use it to my advantage. Besides, having an Arbiter reach the territory first instead of the lord should be pretty annoying, right?"

Josephine and Anna smiled at each other. Without hesitation, Josephine agreed with Anna's plan and left to explain their plans to the king.

Meanwhile, Noel had returned to his inn, where Rose was waiting.

"Have you finished everything?" Rose asked.

"Yeah. I'm finally an Earl and have a territory. We'll be leaving tomorrow morning."

"That fast? You're not going to use this time to look around the capital and maybe form a bit more connections to other nobles?"

"No. This is enough. If I become a bit too close with other nobles, the other nobles might think of it as a threat to their position. For now, I'll be neutral to buy some time to rebuild the territory."

"Have you thought about the city that will become the capital of our territory?" Rose asked. "Since this is a new territory, it shouldn't be built yet, right?"

"I have asked Dimitri to survey the area. There are a total of five towns, but considering the danger of the area, I think having it lean to the border is a pretty good choice."

"Huh? Why do we need to have the city near the border? Won't it be pretty dangerous?"

"Not necessarily. The border will be protected by the royal army of the Greenwood Kingdom, making the transaction easier for both of us. And since we're at the edge, it's easy to sweep everything. And basically, the farthest area from the border will be the safest and we don't need to do much for them, cutting some cost."

"Though, it won't miraculously make the city the safest, right? Even with all those people from the royal army..."

"Indeed. That's why we'll be creating roads and infrastructures to make the area more accessible. As for the soldiers, Dimitri has taken care of that, and I am thinking about converting some mercenaries."

"Won't it make it easier for them to buy off the mercenaries? They might get information about us from them."

"Not necessarily." Noel shook his head. "I'll be introducing a few systems, so I think everyone will be busy once we're there. Of course, speed is the key. For now, I have the initial fund, but we'll need more money to build the territory..."

"So, you're planning to hunt those demons?" Rose frowned.

"Exactly. This will be a good opportunity to train the new soldiers and turn them into elite soldiers as well. I'll explain the systems in detail on the way to our territory."

"Understood. It will take about two weeks from the capital city to our new territory."

"No. It's only one week. I have set up a few checkpoints and asked Dimitri to prepare horses at each checkpoint. So, we'll be rushing all the time."

"It seems that there are a lot of things I don't know after your trip for almost a year..." Rose sighed.

"Well, I'll be telling you everything on the way." Noel chuckled. "So, get some rest for now because from tomorrow, we'll be extremely busy."

"Alright then. I just have one more question. Do you still plan to involve the Demon Relief Squad to build the territory?"

Noel surprisingly shook his head, not because he didn't want to have anything to do with them anymore, but because he didn't want them to get hurt. After all, the problem looming in his territory was at the level they had never seen so far.

Rose could only nod her head, following Noel's decision.

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"That's the current situation." Josephine ended her explanation with a nod as though she confirmed that the situation was under control.

"So, you're planning to let them fight and destroy each other?" The king looked down, falling into deep thought.

"That's right, Your Majesty. By letting them destroy each other, we will be able to see their secret weapon. I'm pretty sure that there is another reason for their growth, and because of their conflict, they should have two different paths. This way, the Muivell Kingdom will be able to see both of their secrets."

The king could agree with this statement. Even though he had acknowledged Anna as an Arbiter, her strength was still unknown. He wanted her to give that secret to him, but she had yet to show any weakness to exploit.

So, if he agreed with this arrangement, Noel would push Anna so far that she would reveal her own secret. Noel would certainly be the same.

Even if Anna would be the one losing in the future, he could simply intervene. Anna would fall into the hands of the royal family, and Noel would die, completely erasing the Ardagan Family.

"That's not a bad suggestion." The king stroked his chin while contemplating the pros and cons. After a few minutes, he said, "We'll let them be for a moment. Since the nobles have given us a bit of pressure because of that Rune Academy, we'll stay quiet for a bit. The crown prince..."

"I don't think that's a good idea, Your Majesty." Josephine looked like she understood why the king mentioned the crown prince. He must want to send the crown prince to Noel's territory not only to grow closer to Anna but also to learn the runes.

Unfortunately for him, Josephine disagreed right away, baffling the king.

"What do you mean, Josephine?"

"Right now, Anna has no weakness. If you send the crown prince there, she will end up protecting the crown prince. If Noel targets the crown prince instead of her..."

"Are you saying the crown prince is incompetent?" The king narrowed his eyes.

"I have overstepped my bounds." Josephine lowered her head, but her tone remained serious as though she deemed the crown prince to be Anna's weakness.

The king couldn't deny her words completely. Josephine had been working for him for a long time, so he knew what she had been doing this whole time.

He ultimately agreed with the arrangement. "Alright. We'll let them be for now. I want you to monitor their situation. Since it will look bad if the royal family sends an expedition mission to him, we'll wait for him to settle down. This should be enough."

"Understood." Josephine nodded.

"Go." The king waved his hand, dismissing Josephine.

Unbeknownst to them, this decision was something they would regret for their entire life.

...

Atracaeca Kingdom.

"Hahahaha. I've finally received the secret of the runes!" The second prince laughed while holding a few pages of papers. It contained all the secrets Noel used to teach Tristan, making the runes a bit easier for him.

"Congratulations, Your Highness." The Great Protector next to him humbly bowed to him. "You're one step closer to becoming the Grand Protector."

"I should thank you too. If not for you, we would have lost the bargaining power." The second prince smirked.

"I don't deserve such praise." The Great Protector shook his head.

"By the way, what is the situation with the frozen statues?"

"All the ice has melted. However, the situation doesn't look that good. Most of the frozen statues can't be resurrected. Even with the healers and all the methods we possess, it's basically impossible for us to stop them from dying. It's like they have 'died' inside the ice for a long time, so there's nothing we can do."

"Is that so?" The second prince frowned. The situation didn't seem to look that good.

The Great Protector added, "However, there are a few strong men among them. They managed to survive the ordeal of time, but there is one big problem. Because the previous civilization didn't have Spiritual Energy... their lives were extremely fragile. They are in a coma right now, and we don't know when they will wake up."

"For now, make sure they don't die." The second prince saw a ray of hope and had to make sure that it wasn't extinguished. He asked, "I'm still wondering... Since the previous civilization didn't have Spiritual Energy, how come we, the latter generation, have the ability to use one?"

"I'm afraid I don't know the answer. But if I have to guess, it's probably through the evolution process. Or there is a chance that the experiment has changed humans and its latter generation to be able to absorb the Spiritual Energy."

"Well..." The second prince sighed. "We won't know the answer for the time being. In any case, we'll continue monitoring those people. My father should have known that I have the secret of runes. With these two, I should be at the top among my brothers." I think you should take a look at

"Yes, Your Highness."

...

In another corner of the Atracaeca Kingdom.

An old man was sitting behind a pile of papers while sighing, "Why do I have to handle all this paperwork when I became a Grand Protector due to my strength? What's the use of my strength, then?"

"Please don't complain, Grand Protector. We'll be here to help you." A middle-aged man stood next to him with another batch of paper.

The Grand Protector was surprisingly smaller than everyone could imagine. He was elderly in his late fifties.

His body looked small and fragile. His muscles were still brimming with energy, but the tired face made one pity this old man if they didn't know his true identity.

"What is the current situation with the princes?"

"The first prince is still training his body. The second prince seems to have gotten the secret of the rune system directly from Noel Ardagan himself. As for the third prince... he is still playing around with women."

"Kh." The Grand Protector facepalmed, frustrated with the first prince and the third prince. However, he noticed the second prince's achievement and asked, "What do you mean by Noel Ardagan? Have you investigated it properly?"

"Yes, Sir. According to the report, Noel Ardagan was supposed to be dead, but it seemed that he had hidden his identity and just appeared in our territory not long ago. Through that encounter, the second prince managed to gain the secret of the runes."

"Is that so? Good, good, good. If we can produce people capable of using runes, we'll be extremely strong." The Grand Protector nodded, satisfied.

"It's just that... we have received a letter from Noel Ardagan."

"Huh? The letter of the creator? What does it say? Does he want to cooperate with the kingdom?"

"This..." The guy looked away while scratching the back of his head. He didn't know how to word it, but it was clear that there was a problem.

"What's wrong? Give me the letter."

"This is the letter, Sir..." He handed him a white envelope, but when the Grand Protector received it, he realized that there were a total of three envelopes.

"Huh? Why are there three letters..." The Grand Protector stopped when he saw the sender of the letters. "Wait a second... Who is this Ezenholm Family?"

"The Ezenholm Family is a famous family from the Greenwood Kingdom. The former head of this family was the current king's tutor."

"Then... Why is the Royal Family sending one too? Even with their relationship, there is no need to do it, right?" The Grand Protector's heart skipped a beat as he pointed at the third letter.

"I believe you should read the content, Sir. You'll understand their connections... And these letters are brought by the Greenwood Kingdom's envoy."

"Greenwood Kingdom? Don't tell me... the Greenwood Kingdom has gotten the cooperation of the creator of the rune system before us?" The Grand Protector panicked and hurriedly opened the letter.

He first opened the Royal Family's letter, considering they were the most important. However, the content was pretty simple and straightforward.

"Noel Ardagan is the descendant of the Royal Family of the Greenwood Kingdom. We're frowning upon your action in extorting him. We've decided to decline the cooperation regarding the Arnus Mine. And shall the Atracaeca Kingdom continue their aggression, the Greenwood Kingdom will be taking action as he is the teacher of our second princess."

"Huh?" The Grand Protector dropped his jaw, not believing what he saw in the letter. The Descendant of the Royal Family? The teacher of the second princess? He looked at his assistant and asked, "This princess... isn't she..."

"Yeah. The one who is most likely to become the next ruler if not for her desire to step away from the throne. "But I'm not aware of the relationship between the royal family and him."

"No, that's not important right now. The teacher of the second princess... there is only one thing that he can teach the second princess, right?"

"I'm afraid so." The guy paused for a moment before confirming, "The rune system."

"Then, what kind of action did we take against him? I haven't heard anything about this. I only knew about him entering the country from you."

The guy could only look away while saying with a troubled tone. "I think you can find the answer in the other two letters."

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"I think you can find the answer in the other two letters."

Upon hearing it, the Grand Protector couldn't help but look at these letters. Since he was more curious about the Ezenholm Family, he opened it first.

"The Ezenholm Family is condemning the Atracaeca Kingdom for extorting the bloodline of our family."

Just a single sentence was enough for the Grand Protector to understand the rest of the content. He couldn't help but grit his teeth, asking, "Is Noel Ardagan truly..."

"After a simple background check, we've confirmed that it's true. He is the son of the famous Luke Ardagan and Leysha Ezenholm. Leysha Ezenholm is the daughter of the famous Raincart Ezenholm. She was once one of the five Spirit Grandmasters the Ezenholm Family had."

The Grand Protector's face darkened. It was clear that the situation was beyond repair. As for the reason, it would be explained in the last letter, which was Noel's letter.

"Before you read it, I think you should be aware of this first, Sir." His advisor stopped him for an important piece of information. "Noel Ardagan became an earl in the Muivell Kingdom not long ago. His achievement makes Anna's talent pale in comparison. Of course, his strength has also reached Spirit Grandmaster."

"..." The Grand Protector's heart skipped a beat. That achievement couldn't be reproduced by their people. And with the status of an earl, they couldn't easily do something to Noel, especially with the fact that he was Princess Livia's teacher.

When he opened the last letter, his heart sank.

"I'm disappointed by the treatment of the Atracaeca Kingdom. I originally thought there could be cooperation between us, especially in the rune department. Unfortunately, the only memory I had of the Atracaeca Kingdom was a bitter one.

"To maintain my integrity, I have fulfilled my side of the agreement by giving the tips of learning rune to your second prince. With this, I will have no connection with the Atracaeca Kingdom.

"With my name, I hereby ban all people from the Atracaeca Kingdom from enlisting in my Rune Academy."

The Grand Protector's heart sank when he saw the last sentence. It was clear that the founder of the runes was planning to create an academy about the very thing he found. Just like the Greenwood Kingdom, they could learn from him directly and advance their progress in runes.

Yet, for one reason or another, the second prince had offended Noel and forced him to take this action.

The Grand Protector asked, "What actually has happened between him and the second prince?"

"..." The man looked hesitant to say it. The problem seemed to be bigger than he originally thought.

Still, as the man at the top, the Grand Protector demanded, "Say it!"

His advisor could only sigh before explaining, "Yes, Sir. You should have gotten the report about the second prince's finding, Sir."

"Was Noel Ardagan with him back then?"

"Yes. It was normal cooperation at first. However, it changed when the Supreme Devil Organization came into the picture. To escape, Noel Ardagan made an agreement with the second prince. His Highness used this opportunity to extort Noel Ardagan... I believe he thought that Noel Ardagan would die in the hands of the Supreme Devil Organization. After all, it was reported that the enemies had two Devil Saints and dozens of Spirit Grandmasters and Spirit Masters.

"However, everything didn't go according to the original plan. While it was not mentioned in the report, two Great Protectors informed us that Great Protector Legolaz had asked for their cooperation. They weren't aware of the situation, so they continued as planned, but it seemed that they were trying to let Noel Ardagan die in the hands of the organization.

"There was also a sign of Legolaz moving the troops near the border of the Zaecuria Kingdom. I'm assuming he was using them to create a line that prevented Noel Ardagan from crossing it, turning the battlefield at the border into his execution ground.

"Last but not least, Noel Ardagan managed to escape into the Greenwood Kingdom. Unfortunately, nothing could be seen other than a huge ice wall. An ice wall of that magnitude could only be unleashed by the famous Raincart. And it was said that he was the one who killed one of the Devil Saints."

The Grand Protector involuntarily crushed the letter in his hand as he couldn't believe what he had just heard. "Are you serious..."

The man couldn't say anything. If the second prince's plan worked, they might have gotten something anybody desired.

But the plan didn't work, and Noel retaliated by banning the Atracaeca Kingdom from enrolling in the Rune Academy.

In other words, the one who would have the least development among the four kingdoms would be none other than their kingdom.

For a kingdom that required strength to manage its country, they would probably be the kingdom that needed runes the most. Yet, that opportunity had been destroyed by their second prince.

The blood was rushing into his head. Even his adviser couldn't look him directly in the eyes.

Spiritual Energy began to leak out of his body as the Grand Protector roared, "GET THAT DAMNED BASTARD, HERE!"

His voice shook the entire palace. It was so loud that it felt like the palace shook for a second.

The people could feel his anger, but their concern was taken away by the fact that they were holding their ears at the moment. After all, his voice almost ruptured their eardrums.

...

While the Atracaeca Kingdom was fuming in anger, the Zaecuria Kingdom seemed to be riding the wave.

They had received a letter from the Greenwood Kingdom. And with the information they received from the spies stationed in the Atracaeca Kingdom, they realized that this was actually an opportunity.

"Hahaha. That old bastard from the Atracaeca Kingdom has produced a really good offspring. Since they're the ones blocking the entrances, we can simply say that our kingdom wants to receive him but is restrained by the border. We would always welcome him with open arms."

"Indeed. Noel Ardagan has become an Earl. We should send a gift to congratulate him."

"Who has the most progress in the runes?"

"I think it's Count Bernard."

"Count Bernard is good, but he is quite stiff. If we send him, he would just ruin it."

"I think we should send Marquis Zepth. While his achievement in rune is less than Count Bernard, he is good at negotiation."

"Good. Let's send Marquis Zepth to the Muivell Kingdom."

The Zaecuria Kingdom was laughing at the Atracaeca Kingdom for not using this opportunity. Since there was no bad blood between the Zaecuria Kingdom and Noel, they could use this opportunity to form a good bond. If possible, they would also send their people to learn runes from Noel.

They even heard about Livia being Noel's student. With that information, they became a bit greedy.

It was an opportunity to send their talented men and women to befriend Noel. With this, they would also do Noel a favor by using their people to stop the Muivell Kingdom from putting more pressure on Noel's shoulders.

As Raincart taught Noel, the letters were extremely useful, especially if one had a good reputation. They could use it as a bargaining power in order to protect themselves.

Even though Raincart couldn't enter the Muivell Kingdom or stop Noel from going back, he could still protect his grandson.

King Oliver didn't realize that not destroying Noel right away was a big mistake. Now that he had sent Noel to the border, it meant that supervising him would be hard.

While he didn't know what Noel was up to, support from the Greenwood Kingdom and the Zaecuria Kingdom came.

It brought him a great shock as he didn't know how Noel gathered their support.

Hiding Livia's identity seemed to work perfectly. Once the report about the Greenwood Kingdom and the Zaecuria Kingdom came, the king hurriedly realized that he had been had.

"Hurry up and call Anna Stargaze back! If we let her go to his territory, she might die. This is a trap set by Noel Ardagan. We can't afford to lose Anna Stargaze right now!" The king ordered.

Unfortunately, it was too late. The timing of the letters was perfect. During that time, Noel had reached his new territory.

Noel was planning to use all these supports to build his new territory, creating a territory that was able to resist the royal family, the demons, and the organization.

However, the support from the two kingdoms wasn't the one that shook the country the most.

There was one more thing that Noel had yet to reveal. Once it was known by the whole world, it would cause all four kingdoms to stand still.

Even the royal family in the Muivell Kingdom had no clue about it.

...

Seven days after Noel's departure, he and Rose finally reached a small village at the edge of the territory where Dimitri and the others had waited.

This was the beginning of his life as a noble.