

S vs Rebirth 881

Chapter 881 Village

"Master, I've been waiting for you." Dimitri lowered his head, greeting Noel in front of a village.

The village was quite big for something that was near the border. However, only Noel knew the true identity of this village.

Noel nodded with a smile. "I've arrived. I'm assuming that everyone is ready."

"You would be surprised when you come in, Sir." Dimitri extended his hand, inviting Noel to enter the village.

Dimitri wasn't accompanied by anyone else, making Rose a bit confused. She thought this was just an ordinary village, but when she followed Noel into the village, she couldn't help but drop her jaw.

"This is..." Rose sucked a cold breath.

Just from the entrance, she could see more than two hundred people.

"How many people are there..." Rose looked around, realizing that there were more people than could be seen currently.

Noel noticed a lot of familiar faces.

"Teacher." Tristan and Livia politely bowed their heads. They had used light clothing similar to the villagers. Tristan aside, Noel was thankful that Livia had no problem with it.

"Have you two got accustomed to this place?" Noel nodded.

"Yes, Teacher."

Noel then turned around and noticed another person.

"It's nice to meet you. I'm thankful that you accept my invitation." Noel walked toward him.

The guy didn't seem to be famous, but it was because he rarely saw people, as he was always locked himself in his workshop.

However, Noel greeted him politely, introducing him. "One of the Master Blacksmiths, Sir Roel."

"I'm coming here because I'm interested in the completed runes. As long as I can continue learning here, then I will do my best to help the lord, including becoming one of the pillars."

Noel smiled. He had planned to rebuild the pillars of the Ardagan Family. Dimitri aside, Roel was another person he had his sight on.

For a single territory to have the exclusive help of a Master Blacksmith was huge. People loved having a good blacksmith because their armor was not only sturdy but it also carried an enhancement. If Roel could embed runes on their equipment, it would become even stronger.

This was enough to elevate the safety of this territory by several levels.

Since Roel had accepted the position, Noel turned to another person. "It seems that fate allows us to meet again."

The one he spoke to was actually a woman. She was leading a group of eighteen other women.

At first, they looked like a weak group who could do nothing. But after a few years, they had turned into a completely independent group.

"When we've fallen to despair and thought nothing could solve it other than our deaths, Lord Earl saved us. We couldn't thank you enough for your help back then. If it's not too much to ask, we would like to work for Lord Earl, helping to build this city."

Noel just wanted to help people like his father in the past. These women were the same people who begged him to kill them after getting kidnapped by the bandits.

However, his words inspired them to live once again. It was due to their efforts that they had reached this far.

"I should be the one asking all of you. Could you help me?"

"We will do our best."

There were truly a lot of people, and he knew that it was impossible to greet all of them in this situation.

Before asking another thing, Noel decided to visit another group first. They had been standing a bit further away, so he had a hard time finding them. But their importance was higher than the rest of the people.

This group consisted of Harley, Howard, Douglas, Charlotte, Balott, and Jasmine.

He met Harley often as he was the head of the information network. Harley smiled, saying, "Don't worry, my lord. We'll complete an information network to make sure nothing goes wrong."

On the other hand, he had never met Howard after getting exiled to the Demon Banner Army. Still, when he was still a young master, he often saw Howard as he was the vice captain of the Ardagan Family's garrison.

Howard was a muscular man with a lot of scars on his face and body. It was clear that he had gone through more than a hundred battles.

He nodded to Noel. "It's the first time we will meet again after that incident. I'm glad that you're fine... I and seventy warriors of the former Ardagan Family have come and want to pledge our loyalty to you, my lord."

"Thank you, Howard." Noel was gratified, but he couldn't show it at the moment.

Douglas cracked his hands as he might be the most energetic one among these people. "You've finally arrived. We can progress with the construction right now. How big is the city you want? I have a design for the wall that can protect us from any dangers. I'll definitely turn this city into an impenetrable fortress."

"Ahaha, I'm looking forward to it." Noel chuckled, not knowing what to say since it would also require a lot of funds.

Charlotte surprisingly looked at Rose instead of him. She scanned Rose up and down before muttering, "Is this my successor? She seems to be intelligent, but she is lacking in a few areas..."

This was the first time Rose met her, so she couldn't help but hide behind Noel.

"Please take care of her for me, Charlotte."

"Of course, my lord. She will be able to do anything soon." Charlotte nodded with a slightly evil smile as though she had prepared a lot of things for Rose.

The fifth person was Balott, he was the one managing the business of the Ardagan Family. In other words, if anyone wanted to do business in the territory, they would have to go through Balott first. Of course, it included internal affairs. The only person Douglas feared might be Balott.

"The fund is not enough, my lord. If we wish to speed up our progress, we'll need three times the amount we have. And I haven't calculated other projects."

"It's fine. I have a few things in mind. I'll tell you about those later."

"I'm looking forward to it." Balott was a rather serious person, but it might be due to this that everyone was a bit scared of Balott.

Last but not least, the head of agriculture, Jasmine. He was the first pillar Noel met.

"Master. The mountain not far from here is perfect. I've checked the soil. There are also a lot of water sources that we can use. In the far future, there shouldn't be any shortage of food for the territory."

"I'm leaving everything to you." Noel nodded. This way, Noel had gathered eight pillars: Dimitri, Roel, Harley, Howard, Douglas, Charlotte, Balott, and Jasmine. He wanted at least a few more, and he actually had the candidates already.

The first one would be the head of medicine, the former royal alchemist Khalid, whom Anna had introduced previously. And the second one was the director of the Rune Academy, Livia.

With Dimitri taking care of the workers, Roel handling the equipment, and Douglas and Harley protecting the territory, they should be able to sustain themselves.

Then, Charlotte oversaw the internal affairs while helping Douglas with the construction of the city. Balott would handle the fund while Jasmine took care of the food.

This would be enough to build the city. However, Noel still wanted two more spots in the territory.

Just like his father, Noel wanted to have three specialties in his territory. The first would be handled by Livia, which was the runes. The second would be the pills that Khalid produced. Last but not least, he wanted to have a strong research group.

He believed that runes would become the future. Hence, he wanted a bridge that connected Roel, Livia, or all related combat departments. In other words, the third specialty would be related to advanced runes, allowing even a normal person to fight.

He still hadn't found any person who could handle this task and become the eleventh pillar of the family. As for the last pillar, he wanted something to oversee the development of the previous civilizations.

So, he might have to join hands with the Tower Association if he wanted to find the last two pillars. But for the time being, he chose to leave the two seats empty.

After greeting the people, Noel turned to Dimitri, asking, "How many people do we have?"

"About four hundred people. It's not enough to create a massive city, so we're thinking about having a migration from other places. With my lord's guarantee, we should be able to fill up the city. Sir Roel's children are the first merchants in our territory, so we'll cooperate with them to handle the supplies."

"How many people do we need?"

"Depending on the size of the city, we might be able to host five to ten thousand people in this city alone. And there will be a few other cities in the future."

"I see. We'll talk about this later. But before that... How about those kids?"

"If you're talking about Erica and the others, they're still in the headquarters. After stabilizing the territory, we'll escort them here. I believe this is the safest plan for them."

"Alright then." Noel agreed with the arrangement and thought about dispersing these people so that they could continue with their work.

However, their attention was taken away by a female's voice echoing from one of the buildings.

"Hahaha. It seems that you have made a lot of preparations, Noel Ardagan."

"!!!" Everyone's gaze followed the voice and found Anna sitting on top of a roof. They never expected that such an important person would come here.

Anna couldn't help but look at Livia first before stating, "I'm here as an Arbiter. You should know that a noble can't chase away an Arbiter from their territory unless there's a valid reason. And I'm here just to 'help' you."

Chapter 882 Not The Past, But The Future

"Is she the famous Anna Stargaze?"

"She shouldn't be here."

"She must be trying to ruin everything. Don't forget about that rumor, she was the one who requested the royal family to execute the former master and mistress, and she even tried to kill the current lord."

The people were discussing Anna's appearance. Only a few people, like Dimitri and Rose, knew the truth.

Unfortunately for them, Noel had asked them to pacify the rest of the people while he dragged Anna to the house in the center of the village. They hadn't specified the living quarters of the mansion and other things, so he just used the one in the middle to talk to Anna.

"Seriously... Do you even need to do something like that?" Noel let out a long sigh while closing the door. He even covered the windows with ice, preventing anyone from seeing or listening to their conversation.

"I have to. I don't know if there are any spies or not. And I go all the way here with that kind of excuse, so I should at least put up that kind of show." Anna shook her head helplessly.

"Well..." Noel paused for a moment. "You've gotten good with your acting."

"Thanks to you." Anna chuckled while pointing at the table. "Why don't we have a seat?"

"This is not going to be long. If we talk too long, people will suspect something." Noel rejected the invitation and asked, "Still, what are you doing here? I thought that staying with the royal family shouldn't pose any problems for you, right?"

"Does that mean you don't want me here?" Anna couldn't help but furrow her eyebrows.

"Of course not. I don't mind having you here. It's just... you will be tired if you have to put up the act every single time." Noel explained his concern. It was rare that Noel was this considerate. In fact, she felt Noel had changed somehow.

"I..." Anna scratched the back of her head. She recalled what her father said back then and the realization that came afterward.

There was an urge to talk about everything, but the words stuck in her throat.

Just like Anna, his grandfather had also told him about his relationship. The reason why he never wanted someone to accompany him was because that person was bound to become a burden. What if he fell for someone and the royal family kidnapped that person to go against him?

However, Anna was different. Her strength, experience, and talent were far better than the rest.

Let alone protecting her, she might be the one shielding him. Even with this power, he didn't know whether he could win against Anna or not. Though, he would probably become stronger than her when they both reached the limit of absorption of the Demon Crystals, considering his limit was twice of hers.

More importantly, he had experienced a lot with Anna. That memory stuck in his mind.

Noel recalled what his grandfather said about telling him that not all matters could be solved rationally. Sometimes, he just had to drop everything and do what his instincts and feelings told him.

After seeing her troubled face, Noel couldn't help but say, "You see... I believe I haven't asked you this question... Have I caused you any inconveniences like acting as enemies or other things... If you're tired of it, then I have to apolog—"

"No!" Anna cut Noel's words and raised her head. She had a hard time saying everything and ended up taking a few deep breaths.

Noel patiently waited for her. The current situation reminded him of Anna's outburst when they were inside the previous Ardagan's mansion. At that time, Anna was tired because everything she did was never considered by Noel. So, he wanted to know what Anna had to say this time.

"I..." Anna clenched her fists. Surprisingly, she lowered her head all of a sudden and finally said, "I'm sorry. In the past, you've never wanted me to say it, and the longer I wait, the harder it becomes for me to say it. But... sorry... I apologize for all my actions in the past. I had ordered the execution of your parents and the downfall of your families. Without me, your family would still be intact, and you wouldn't have to endure all this hardship!"

"It turned out... I was more selfish than I originally thought. Instead of asking for forgiveness, I turned out to be forcing you to change. Yes, instead of taking responsibility, I blamed everything on you.

"I thought that I had been considerate, but it appeared that you were more considerate. I simply used my strength to force you to be like that..."

Anna recalled what had happened in her previous life. With Noel's schemes, there were a lot of times he could kill her. Yet, he didn't do it. To put it simply, he had the strength to do it but chose not to.

On the other hand, the current Noel didn't have the strength and was forced to abandon that thought. Of course, if one looked from her perspective, she also had the strength but chose not to kill him. But the problem came from her, not the other way around. Ultimately, it was her fault.

"I..." Anna walked closer to Noel while biting her lips. "I am sorry for ruining everything."

Noel was quite surprised that Anna would even say something like this. He froze, trying his best to come up with a reply.

Anna looked like she was tired of acting like this. She wanted to end everything and become his ally like Dimitri and the others instead of playing the villain role.

"It seems that I have put a big burden on your shoulders." Noel closed his eyes for a moment. "As you said earlier, my parents' execution tore me, and my exile broke me apart. When you came to the Demon Banner Army, the only thing I could think of was my revenge.

"But the longer I know you, the more I realize that you are just a human. Both of us have made a grave mistake in our lives.

"What if I actually pushed aside my laziness from the beginning and worked hard to become strong? Would my family get bullied to that extent? Would my father create this scheme?

"I have been thinking that... if our situation is different... if we were equal in the past, would all this happen?" Noel scratched the back of his head. "How do I say this... would there be a need for forgiveness if things went differently?"

Noel was wondering what would happen if he actually trained with Ardagan from the beginning. His family might even go beyond this, and his father wouldn't have to create this scheme. In fact, he could openly form a connection with his best friend, Marquis Stargaze.

At that time, he and Anna might be best friends or even more.

Unfortunately, nothing could change the past.

"Now that you bring up this matter, I've actually realized something. I believe that... the past is fine as it is. After all, what actually matters is the future." Noel paused for a moment before asking, "If I forgive you right now, will it change the past?"

"...No." She shook her head helplessly.

"That's why it doesn't really matter anymore." Noel looked into Anna's eyes and said solemnly, "What I despise is the Anna in the past. However, what I like is the current Anna... the current you. Whatever you're doing right now won't change the past, but it will definitely shape the future. Hence, I will say this to you. I will never forgive everything you've done in the past."

Anna's body froze, thinking it was a rejection.

But Noel added, "However, I will put aside the grudge, the hatred, and the anger. Because this is the future I want to shape."

Anna's eyes regained their light. She fully understood what he meant. As he said, no matter what she had done, it would never change the past.

With Noel's words, he wanted both of them to put down the grudge, especially her guilt. After all, he wanted to create a future that completely wouldn't happen unless she let go of the burden.

His words somehow gave her another realization, especially regarding her rebirth. Why would she go back to the past? Was it to fix everything?

No. She had never fixed anything. Everything that was broken would never be the same anymore, even if they managed to reattach every single piece.

But she could choose whether to throw it away or polish it to create something anew.

Yes, the most probable reason for her to return to the past might not be to fix the past; it was to create a new future.

"Noel... do you remember the bet we agreed on during that expedition..."

She must be talking about the bet about telling each other their secret, he thought. He was soon surprised that Anna hugged him all of a sudden.

"Eh?" Noel's body shook while Anna buried her face in his chest out of embarrassment while muttering, "I think... I've lost."

Chapter 883 Most Awkward

"I think... I've lost."

Noel's body froze. He didn't think that Anna would do something of this level. There were a lot of things he wanted to say, but his grandfather reminded him that it was better to follow his instinct.

If Noel followed his logic, he would think that if he agreed to this, it would mean that the territory would be barraged by attacks from their enemies. It would cause a lot of problems for the territory.

Even the royal family might change their approach when they realize that Anna and Noel had joined hands this whole time.

That was why Noel actually closed his eyes for a moment as though wondering whether he should follow his brain or his heart.

Anna had always been beside him the whole time. There was a time she was helpful, playful or even hateful. Yet, all of them were good memories.

There was one reminder from his grandfather that rang in his mind this whole time.

"Instead of using your brain to consider whether that decision is good or bad, why don't you make the decision first and use that brain to turn that decision into a good one."

In other words, whether it was a good or bad decision, it didn't really matter because he could come up with a plan to turn the situation around.

With that thought in mind, Noel had decided to trust his feelings. He gently circled his arms on Anna's back while saying, "No. You haven't lost... Let's just call it a draw."

Anna trembled in shock. "Do I really deserve this..."

"You don't become a good person. However, when people recognize you as a good person that you know that you've done something good. And that's why I can tell you this... don't think too low of yourself."

Noel's tone was serene, giving peace to her heart.

Anna made a wry smile. "I'm sorry for doing things this way. If only I could be more honest and more straightforward instead of doing this in a roundabout way..."

"It's my fault too. But don't you think this is just like us? If we're that straightforward, we would have killed each other in the past." Noel chuckled.

"That might be true..."

Anna and Noel closed their eyes, just enjoying the feeling of each other's embrace. This was probably the first time they confronted their feelings.

"I have never felt something like this before..." Anna muttered.

"Me too. Though, I have to warn you that I'm a selfish person... but I can guarantee that I will do my best to do anything for you."

"I already know what kind of person you are. And you also know me..."

"Indeed." Noel smiled. It was a bit awkward because they had never experienced something like this. Even their parents didn't teach them much in this area. However, that awkwardness showed them that they had a lot of things to improve. This was just the first step.

"I think I should get going... If I stay too long, the people will get suspicious. You don't have to announce anything... Just let them realize it later and get shocked. This should be enough to buy us some time, right?" Anna gently released herself from Noel.

"No." Noel shook his head. "If we want to do it, then we will announce it right away."

"But..." Anna couldn't help but furrow her eyebrows. She didn't want to be the cause of Noel's problems.

"As I said earlier, we'll leave the past behind. It's time to create a new future." Noel's face turned solemn. "That's why I'm going to announce it right away. They can be shocked or whatever they want, and I will think of another plan to handle all our future problems."

Anna was amused. She never thought that Noel would actually scrap the plan he had worked hard for to show his determination.

"What do you want me to do?" Anna asked. Since Noel was prepared to go that far for her, she also didn't hesitate to do something even if it was controversial.

"I think we should take a seat first." Noel pointed at the table not far from them. Anna suggested sitting earlier, but they completely forgot about it because of the matter.

Anna awkwardly nodded while Noel contemplated their current situation.

"If you're going to announce our relationship, there is a chance that they will strip me of my status."

"No. They won't do that. They'll probably send your teacher to go against us instead. After all, the Ardagan Family has four Grandmasters with you here."

"Dimitri, Howard, and us?"

"Yeah." Noel nodded.

"In that case, we should bolster our men even further. If you're going to announce it, Khalid would definitely side with us. We should call him here as soon as possible."

"That's a good idea. For now, the territory is still in its early stages. So, building the territory takes priority. You should know where the resources in this territory are hidden, right?"

"Leave it to me. Should I set off to clean up those lands?"

"Yeah. But I don't want you to do it alone. Howard will be with you."

Anna thought for a moment. At first, it looked like Noel was trying to protect her. But Noel should have confidence in her strength and believed that she was stronger than Howard. In that case, Noel's aim must be something else, she thought.

"To train those knights?" Anna asked.

"Yeah. I'll give you the details after meeting with all the pillars tomorrow. Since everyone will know that we're not enemies, I can't predict how they are going to react. That's why I will need a lot of people to fill this land."

"With a lot of people, you can assign them to a lot of things."

"Indeed. I think I have to apologize because I can't do anything for you right now."

"No need. I can understand the situation, and it's partially because of me."

Noel paused as he had a lot of things to consider.

Anna looked around, wondering if this place had a map of the region or not. But considering this was just a normal house, there was nothing they could use to consider their plan.

However, there was one thing that caught her attention. "That's right. Noel, how far should we spread the information?"

"How far?" Noel didn't understand her way of thinking at first, but he soon realized that this precious information could actually be used in another way. "But are you sure you want to do this?"

"Since we've decided to do this, we should go all the way." Anna agreed without hesitation.

"In that case, let's shake the entire kingdom... no, the entire world." Noel pointed at Anna and himself in succession while saying, "You have got a wild idea, while I will create a concrete plan. Don't you agree?"

"My wild idea is unpredictable since it's just my instinct telling me right."

"Yeah. And I'll consolidate that idea to a concrete plan, which will throw off everyone."

Anna agreed with this arrangement. She couldn't compete with him in terms of planning, but she could complement him.

She said, "That's right. However, I'm going to warn you first. Even if we're together, I'm still not planning to lose to you."

"I know. You are that kind of person. And we'll see whether you can keep up with my plan." Noel smirked.

"Hahaha. This is truly our style." Anna raised one finger. "In that case, I think I should tell you my goal. I want to become the strongest woman in the world, surpassing even your ancestors. I will become the first woman to become the legendary Spirit King. I'm not planning to stop, so you don't need to hesitate to ask for my protection."

"Protect me? Who?" Noel shook his head helplessly. "I can protect myself."

"Really? Should we test it?"

"Fine by me." Noel chuckled.

"By the way, what is your goal, Noel?"

"My goal?" Noel thought for a moment. "I'm afraid I can't tell you. It's not because I don't want to tell you, but if I tell you, it will mean that the goal can't be achieved anymore."

"Is that so?" Anna looked a bit sad, but it was understandable. She had just to trust Noel, even if Noel's goal was actually to kill her.

Since the atmosphere became awkward again, Anna tried to change the topic. "That's right. We've gone too far from the topic. Let's return to the first discussion, shall we?"

"No. While we're at it, I think I'll do one more thing." Noel raised a finger as if asking her for a minute. He then placed his hands on his chest, waist, or even his back like he was searching for something.

After a while, he began reaching for something in the pocket near his abdomen. It was a small pouch that looked a bit worn out. But it was worn out because it was important enough for Noel to keep it by his side all the time.

He opened the pouch and turned it upside down, trying to get the items inside of it to fall down.

And Anna couldn't help but widen her eyes when a pair of golden rings dropped to his palm. The rings didn't have any jewelry or anything. Instead, it had a complicated pattern that of a rune.

"These two rings are symbolized as the token of love by the Ancestor of the Ardagan Family to propose to his most important person.

"With my ancestor as the witness, I, Noel Ardagan, solemnly swear that I will accompany Anna Stargaze for the rest of my life."

Noel raised one of the rings to Anna.

Anna's face reddened from the shock and excitement, her hands were shaking as she wanted to touch the ring but was overwhelmed by her feelings.

They had truly gone too far from the topic, but Anna truly didn't expect Noel to end their randomness with a proposal. They felt like kids who didn't know anything about love and relationships. But this awkwardness actually showed their sincere feelings.

"I..." Anna had a hard time calming her heart down. "I, too, will accompany Noel Ardagan for the rest of my life. I wish that the ancestor blesses our relationship."

Chapter 884 Announcement

"What are we going to do?"

"It has been almost two hours since they are inside."

"Did our lord get threatened by her?"

The people of the Ardagan Family couldn't help but look at Dimitri, who had been accompanying Noel this whole time.

At first, they were doing their jobs, but after an hour, they became curious about the discussion Noel and Anna had. There must be an extremely important discussion since it took so long.

At the same time, Dimitri was confused about the length of this discussion as well. Considering their current standing, it was unlikely for Noel to waste this much time.

So, there was a chance that something must have happened. Still, the entire house was blocked by Noel's ice, so it was impossible to find anything.

Dimitri could only shake his head helplessly, saying, "I'm not sure either. Master hasn't told me anything."

"Seriously? Not even you? But they are enemies, right? She was the cause of the execution of the former lords. We couldn't let this go."

"That's right. We should forcefully enter and make this woman pay for her crime."

The other pillars nodded in agreement. Dimitri didn't receive any orders to disclose Anna and Noel's true relationship, so he could only shake his head as though he was rejecting the idea.

"Dimitri!" They were glaring at Dimitri's passive action. Dimitri was the strongest among them, so he should be the one to break the ice that protected the house.

"If you don't want to do it, then I will." Howard stepped forth while cracking his fingers.

"Oh, Howard!" Their expression brightened, knowing that Howard should have the strength to do it as well.

But right when Howard wanted to gather his energy, the ice surrounding the house began to vanish.

"Hmm?" Howard paused his action and observed the fluctuation of the spiritual energy. "It seems that... it's really gone. The ice is gone."

"What?" Their gazes turned to the house, specifically the door's handle. They could see the handle gradually rotated, making them anxious. They wished their lord would come out of the house unharmed.

Fortunately, their wish was granted as Noel was the one opening the door, followed by Anna.

"My lord..." Howard squinted his eyes to check his condition.

"Don't worry. I'm alright." Noel waved his hand while Anna stood next to him, her face slightly red.

"Hmm?" Dimitri couldn't help but furrow his eyebrows as though noticing the unusual behaviors of these two.

"Actually, I have a big announcement to make." Noel noticed that most of the pillars were actually waiting for him. So, it would be the best time to announce this matter.

With him raising his left hand, Dimitri instantly understood what was going on. However, he wasn't spared by the shock as he was the first to drop his jaw. There was actually a ring on Noel's finger.

Then, Noel actually confirmed it by grabbing Anna's left hand to show the same thing.

Due to her high perception, Rose couldn't help but notice the rings and ask out loud, "The ring... Don't tell me..."

With a big smile on his face, Noel announced, "I and Anna Stargaze are officially engaged."

It was a simple statement. Everyone could hear it loud and clear. But that was probably the exact reason why they couldn't help but drop their jaws to the ground.

"EEEEEEHHHHHHHHHHH?!"

Jasmine and the others couldn't comprehend this matter. They only knew that Anna was their enemy. Yet, after a long discussion with their lord, Anna actually became his fiancée.

It was impossible to connect the dots.

Harley, one of the people who knew the secret, couldn't help but laugh. "Hahahahaha. This is surprising and hilarious! My lord... and my lady, congratulations to you both."

"Harley? Why are you congratulating her?" Charlotte asked, concerned about their current status.

Surprisingly, the one to answer that question was actually Rose. She said, "That's actually what happened... Congratulations to both of you."

"Dimitri, say something to him! He must be bewitched!" Howard grabbed Dimitri's shoulder while pointing at Noel. He acknowledged that Anna was beautiful, and her reputation had stated that she was one of the most beautiful people in the country. That was the reason why he thought Noel had been seduced by Anna.

Contrary to his expectation, Dimitri actually rubbed his eyes as though he was shedding some tears because of how proud he was. "Master... you've finally... you've finally..."

Howard's face darkened, looking at Dimitri's reaction in horror as if Dimitri had just gone insane.

"There must be something wrong with this. Is it because the Ardagan Family lacks the necessary funding? If that's the case, my lord, you shouldn't have sacrificed yourself. Let this Balott take care of the family's funds." Balott raised his hand, trying to prevent such a situation.

However, Livia, who was next to him, gave a contradictory reaction. "I see. It's no wonder that my father has told me that the chance is close to impossible." She politely bowed her head while lifting her skirt. "The Greenwood Kingdom congratulates Earl Noel for his engagement. And I also want to congratulate you as a student."

"Thank you, Livia." Noel chuckled.

"You... you..." Balott wanted to say something, but he didn't know what to say at this point. The fact that Anna and Noel got engaged alone was enough to shake the entire kingdom, let alone the acknowledgment from the Greenwood Kingdom. He knew that this matter would definitely shake the whole world.

"By the way, Charlotte. I'm going to spend the rest of the day looking around the village. So, I want all the pillars to gather tomorrow morning since I have a lot of decisions to make. This will shape the entire territory." Noel explained.

"That's not important right now, my lord." Charlotte panicked, thinking she had made a huge mistake by letting the son of the former lord fall in Anna's hand. Anna just looked like a witch who could bend anyone to her will.

"You guys are exaggerating." Noel chuckled. "She didn't bewitch me or anything. This is my decision."

"Still, it's quite surprising for you to suddenly announce this matter, Master." Dimitri walked closer and asked, "When I was with you, I didn't see any sign of this. When did you decide to do this?"

"Just now. But well, I should thank my grandfather for this." Noel made a wry smile.

In fact, both his grandfather and her father were the actual cause. If his grandfather didn't give him this important advice or if her father didn't incite her jealousy, both of them wouldn't be together.

That was right. Noel wouldn't lower his pride and express his feelings and Anna would think that Noel was still hers without the sense of urgency.

Without those two, Noel and Anna might not be together for another few years.

Anna couldn't help but lower her head, blushing. She could understand their reactions, but she planned to confront that problem. On the other hand, the acknowledgement from Dimitri, Harley, Rose, and Livia made her embarrassed.

"What's wrong with you guys? It's nothing big really." Noel waved his hand while asking Charlotte.

"Aren't you supposed to be happy since you know that the Ardagan Family won't lack a successor? Well, we're only engaged right now. So, it will be a bit later in the future."

"No, that's not the point!" Charlotte shook her head, having trouble correcting Noel.

"You too, Balott. Since the territory is still unstable, I'm not planning to use the funds for the marriage right now. So, we'll stabilize the territory in one year and hold the wedding at that time. Shouldn't you be happy that we won't run out of funds for the time being?"

"Charlotte said what I wanted to say. That's not the point, my lord." Balott wanted to say that if it was any other woman, he would be happy. At the same time, he couldn't say that his lord had made a bad decision.

Noel scratched the back of his head, not knowing what to do with these guys. In the end, he could only look at Dimitri and say, "You should handle the rest of the problems."

"The rest of the problems..." Dimitri noticed what he truly intended to do. "I understand. Leave it to me."

Noel turned to Harley. "Spread the words about my engagement."

"Consider it done, my lord." Harley bowed with a smile. He was certainly excited to spread these words through the brothels. And before long, the engagement would reach everyone's ears.

"Livia. You don't have to worry about runes for three days. Just help me with the territory a little bit, will you?"

"Yes, Teacher. I'll help everyone here with my experience and knowledge."

Finally, Noel turned to Rose and said, "I'll be touring around the village to learn more about this place. So, calm these people down for me. We're going to have a meeting tomorrow morning after all."

"Understood."

After giving his orders to the four people who knew about his relationship with Anna, Noel held Anna's hand while pointing forward. "Let's go, shall we?"

"Um..." Anna was still embarrassed by everyone's reaction, so she only nodded timidly as they ran away from these people.

Chapter 885 Realization

A middle-aged man was hidden between two houses as he attached a small scroll to a bird's foot before releasing the bird into the sky.

"They should know about this big news right away!" The guy muttered while looking at the bird.

Unbeknownst to him, his shadow began to move. A few tentacles suddenly emerged and restrained his mouth, hands, and feet.

"Mhmmf?!"

The guy panicked, not knowing what was happening. However, he couldn't do anything as his body began to sink into the shadows.

When he submerged completely, it would be the last time that man was ever seen again.

Next to him was none other than Dimitri.

Noel must have predicted that there would be spies in their territory. No matter how careful he was, it was impossible to completely check all their background. So, Noel ordered him to take care of the rest, which meant the spies.

"Luckily, there are only three spies. I'm sure that two of them are from the Supreme Devil Organization and the Royal Family. But I don't know who that third spy belongs to..." Dimitri shook his head helplessly. "In any case, since the news has to be spread, I'll let the birds go."

Yes. Noel had ordered to spread the news, so there was no reason for Dimitri to kill the birds.

Instead, he killed the spies after sending the news, creating an illusion that the spies were still there and would report to them once they got more important news.

This would fool their enemies for a while.

...

As Dimitri said, two of the spies came from the Royal Family and the Supreme Devil Organization.

In the Supreme Devil Organization's headquarters, a man suddenly rushed into the meeting between the Supreme Devil and his Devil Saints.

"We have an emergency... they have fooled us!" The guy shouted, interrupting them while waving the scroll he got.

"Fooled us? What do you mean?" Qiel noticed the scroll and stopped him.

The man handed the scroll to her while catching his breath.

When Qiel read the information written on the paper, she couldn't help but gasp. "This is..."

"What's wrong, Qiel?" Alexander asked while furrowing his eyebrows. It was rare to see Qiel that shocked, so he couldn't help but get curious.

Qiel's expression darkened. "We've been fooled... by Noel Ardagan. We've just received the news from our spy that..." Qiel seemed to have a hard time understanding the situation, but she still finished her words. "...Noel Ardagan and Anna Stargaze are now officially engaged."

"Engaged... Engaged?!" Alexander dropped his jaw to the ground. "Wait a minute... Anna Stargaze once tried to disturb our plan by investigating Count Heirden. At that time, she was able to barely escape through her True Spirit Body. I didn't think too much about her appearance, but it was at that time Noel and the other squads came. Don't tell me... they've been working together the whole time?"

Qiel simply couldn't believe her realization. They all had been fooled by these two geniuses. They were always together, but because of the previous farce, no one would doubt them.

Qiel couldn't help but glance at Laufey. "You were an Ardagan before... did you know anything about this?"

"No." Laufey shook his head. "He never mentioned any engagement regarding his son. However, it might be possible... since Kevin Stargaze was his friend. The reason why they managed to fool all of us was because... Anna Stargaze was truly like that in the past. She wanted to destroy the Ardagan Family once and for all. But the enemies soon turned into lovers. It was hard to accept, but this was the only possible plan I could think of."

"Now that I think about it, Anna Stargaze went to the Demon Banner Army, right? It was to kill him, right?" Alexander asked, doubting his own words.

"What if Kevin Stargaze was the one sending her so that she could know Noel better? It might be what he wanted this whole time... with these two geniuses joining hands, they would pretty much be untouchable. Don't forget that we don't know the extent of the Ardagan Family's power right now... With Anna Stargaze here, they have at least four Spirit Grandmasters in their rank... That's all we know." Qiel gritted her teeth.

No one would expect that they had been fooled to this extent.

Qiel couldn't help but look at Alexander. "Can you do something to them?"

"Oscar is tracking me. If I make my move, we will clash again. So, not at the moment..." Alexander shook his head helplessly.

"I..." Laufey wanted to volunteer, but after the previous defeat, he didn't know whether it was the right thing to do or not.

On the other hand, Qiel said, "It's going to be hard for us to do anything to him. Dimitri could stop one of us pretty easily, while Noel managed to stop my arrows when he was only a Spirit Master. Now that he has become a Spirit Grandmaster, a half-baked plan would just cause us a disastrous defeat."

"Are you saying we should lay low for the time being?" Alexander asked. "You should know that those two geniuses are advancing by leaps and bounds. If we give them another year, we might not be able to defeat them."

"I know. That's why I'm trying to think of a plan." Qiel raised her voice, getting frustrated.

"Noel alone is already a headache, and there is Anna Stargaze, who defeated Count Heirden without her True Spirit Body. If we want to defeat them, we could only strike the people around them or... have at least three peak Spirit Grandmaster to handle them along with a lot of minions." Alexander sighed, realizing that the chance in the Atracaeca Kingdom was truly their only opportunity to kill him.

Laufey thought for a moment and asked, "What if we use the demons? There are a lot of Superior Demons near the border."

"We need at least two high level Superior Demons to pull that off. Just gathering those demons alone will need a lot of time." Qiel rejected the idea.

All of a sudden, the voice of the Supreme Devil resounded in everyone's ears.

"Laufey. If I give you the task, how long do you need to gather all those demons?"

Laufey was surprised at first but soon fell into deep thought. After a minute, Laufey said, "I need three months to do it. I should be able to gather two or three high level Superior Demons along with thousands of demons beneath them."

"Work on it right away. And Qiel, use those three months to create a concrete plan to take him down."

"Understood, Sire." Qiel bowed to him without hesitation. "But Sire... three months are a bit too long. While it's impossible to create the city within three months, they would still have stabilized the territory."

"I will use my own means to buy us some time."

With the guarantee of the Supreme Devil, Qiel instantly ordered, "Alexander. I want you to lead our men and confront the Demon Banner Army head-on."

"So, I'm the bait right now?"

"Yeah. I want you to create a diversion to make sure the Demon Banner Army doesn't get involved in this matter."

"Alright. I could do that for you."

"Laufey, you'll be focusing on your task and gathering as many demons as you can. I want you to hold them back northwest of their territory. We are fortunate that they have chosen the northern part to create their main city. It's easier to strike them there."

"Got it. What are you planning to do then?"

"I have to observe the entire territory and calculate the terrains. Noel is a genius both in spirit and brain. He's most likely going to use the terrain to protect his territory. In fact, he should have made some preparations before choosing this exact location... Considering it's hard to strike him from the west and east as it's blocked by a mountain and a river. So, I can't underestimate him."

Qiel had learned it the hard way. Despite all odds, Noel still had the chance to turn them around, so it was best to calculate everything first.

"Alright." Laufey nodded, satisfied.

"Hey, don't forget those angry nobles... they are counting on him to create the Rune Academy. So, we still need to stop them from reinforcing his territory."

"I know. Those nobles would likely use this opportunity to make Noel owe them a favor. But I have my own means to stop them. Besides, he will surely bring a lot of people into his territory, so there are some opportunities to strike them from the inside." Qiel waved her hands.

"Because of the situation, we have to be fast." Laufey asked one last question, "Qiel, how long do you think they need to become untouchable?"

"The creation of the fortress should take at least a year, even with a thousand workers. But he is a Rune Master, and under him is a Master Blacksmith. Once the wall is built, it's impossible to break it from the outside. Since we're talking about him, he will surely build the wall from the north side first to fend off our attack."

"That's enough. I have to go." Laufey realized the severity of this problem and wasted no more seconds to get it done.

Qiel couldn't help but look down, feeling that she had missed something important.

And that was when Alexander dropped the bomb that everyone forgot due to the engagement.

"Qiel... if Anna and Noel were together the whole time, why would Anna suggest this territory then?"

Thud!

Qiel's heart sank in horror.

Chapter 886 Panic

Royal Palace.

Bang!

The door was slammed open, startling a lot of people inside.

"We've got big news!" The guard rushed inside. His expression was in complete shock, and his breath was hoarse. It was clear that he couldn't believe what he had just heard. Before anyone could say anything, he declared out loud, "We've gotten the news from the north that... Noel Ardagan and Anna Stargaze are now officially engaged!"

Instead of the throne room, this one was a meeting room, usually used to hold an important meeting that not a lot of people would know.

Inside the room sat down a few people, such as the king, Josephine, and other people from the king's faction.

"!!!" All of them couldn't help but widen their eyes in shock as though they didn't believe what they had just heard.

"What did you say?!" The king asked, confirming the news.

"We've received the words from our spy. It appears that Noel Ardagan and Anna Stargaze are now officially engaged. They've announced it together in front of the people in that city." The guard repeated.

"Damn!" Josephine slammed the table. As Anna's teacher, she was the first to understand the situation. She noticed that Anna had actually broken the brainwashing and hidden it from everyone else, including her. "Since when..."

Josephine's reaction was enough for the quick-witted king to reach the same conclusion. "We've been fooled. Anna Stargaze was never on the same side... No, it should actually explain everything."

The king looked down for a moment, recounting every news regarding Noel and Anna. "Is it from the very start? Noel and Anna have been together since the start. That's the reason why Anna Stargaze enlisted in the Demon Banner Army.

"When the news about her killing Noel Ardagan spread and his corpse was never found, I should have realized that she had hidden the truth. Noel Ardagan never died and used that opportunity to not only hide his identity but also make us trust Anna.

"The Water Lord and Stone Lord supporting him shouldn't be weird, considering they met him when he used his fake identity to travel together with the Demon Relief Squad.

"After that, the rune was spread, and a lot of things happened... until eventually Anna Stargaze became an Arbiter."

The people realized the severity of this matter after that explanation. Their faces became pale as a few of them raised their voices.

"Then, does that mean the Ardagan Family and the Stargaze Family have planned all this from the start?"

"Kevin Stargaze must already know this."

"But he was fighting with his own daughter in front of everyone else..."

"That's exactly the reason. They were acting like that, so no one doubted them. Meanwhile, the truth was that Anna and Noel had been planning their engagement all this time."

Josephine bit her lips while recalling what Anna said about Noel's territory. Wanting to mess with Noel? Wanting to hinder his progress? Destroying his plan? All of them were lies.

The reason why Anna wanted to head to Noel's territory was so that she could finally drop all her acts and show the truth.

"That damned brat!" Josephine clutched her head; her heart was filled with frustration and anger. If she had known all this from the start, she could have pressured Anna and the Stargaze Family.

"What will happen now?"

"The Stargaze Family will definitely support this. Knowing Kevin, he will even give his blessing and spread that news!"

"That's right. The Stargaze Family still has a successor. While he is shadowed by Anna's achievement, he is still decent."

"Then, Kevin's plan must be to marry his daughter to Noel. If the two most talented people marry, their descendants would be stars!"

"No, that shouldn't be everything. If we act right now and separate them by attacking them, we will get a backlash from all other nobles. No, with the influence of Noel Ardagan, other countries would definitely make their moves."

"The Greenwood Kingdom should have known about this. If I'm not wrong, he has been visiting the Greenwood Kingdom in the past."

"The Zaecuria Kingdom will take advantage of this opportunity to protect Noel so as to owe him a favor."

"No, the Atracaeca Kingdom will be the most desperate since they want to fix their relationship with Noel. After all, they are the only countries banned from learning runes from Noel himself."

"This is not good."

"Yeah. This has become an international problem!"

The people inside the room were panicking. What could they actually do?

With Anna's existence, the Ardagan Family had four Spirit Grandmasters. If it was only a low level grandmaster, they could still do it somehow.

However, Anna had proven herself in the battle against Count Heirden. Noel's strength was still unknown, but the fact that his brain was enough to kill a Devil Saint showed how dangerous it would be to attack him without a concrete plan.

There was also Dimitri, the number one assassin. If they wanted to attack them, they should have someone at Dimitri's level to stop him.

Howard might not be as good as the other three, but he was still the vice captain of the previous Ardagan Family. He had the strength and experience to lead the soldiers, which would be extremely crucial in the defense part.

"We can't attack the Ardagan Family, Your Majesty."

"That's right. If we attack them right now, the others won't let us off."

"We have to find another plan to hinder their progress. If the situation becomes even more complicated, there is a chance that we won't be able to harm them anymore."

"If they're going to use this opportunity to attack us..."

The people became silent. Their faces were already pale enough as though the blood was leaving their bodies.

Anna had been with them for a while, so she must have figured out their identities and told Noel about it.

With Noel's brain, he should be able to create a countermeasure, if not a counterattack, to their respective families.

The king couldn't say anything. He was too shocked by this news and even if he came up with something, it would just risk everything he had built so far.

The king leaned his back on the chair helplessly.

"What are we going to do?" The king muttered while recounting the time when Anna was still in the court. He noticed something. "Wait a minute... If they are together in this, why would Anna Stargaze suggest this dangerous territory?"

"Eh?"

The people began to realize something was wrong. If they were together, there was no way Anna would give up this new territory and endanger her future husband.

Yet, she still gave them. If they thought about it, it was easy to notice that Anna wasn't the one who created that plan. It was Noel.

That was right. Noel was the one suggesting that territory himself. And the remaining question was why? Why would he place himself in that territory instead of the former Ardagan's territory?

"Check the information about Lounstein."

"I have checked. Anna had said a few characteristics as well. The territory was fertile and good for a city, but safety was their concern. Due to the rampaging demon, the territory wouldn't be able to function."

"But..." One of them asked, "What if Noel Ardagan and Anna Stargaze are strong enough to solve that drawback?"

The people sucked a cold breath.

"Then, the territory is a perfect place for people to live. It has a vast fertile land. There are two mountains and two rivers, which are good terrain for defensive battles. We don't know much about the mining, but one of the elders in the Tower Association is eyeing that territory due to a certain vein. There should be a mineral vein, but we don't know the exact details."

That explanation alone was enough to tell everyone how good the territory was. Although it hadn't been developed, if Noel played his card right, it would be one of the most prosperous cities in the whole kingdom.

"I think... you should have known that the Ardagan Family has exhausted a lot of its resources. Even if they develop there, almost everything has been exploited. While it's true that the territory has been developed, it's going to crumble sooner or later."

"Don't tell me, Noel Ardagan knows about this all along?"

"His father should have told him. Luke Ardagan was the god of wealth, so his eyes should be able to see the state of the Ardagan Family and tell his son..."

The people became more panicked. If Noel was allowed to be developed, they would be devoured sooner or later.

Noel and Anna's reputation was huge, but if they were enemies, the opinions would split. However, if they actually combined their reputation and strength, the nobles wouldn't hesitate to help them.

Despair started to fill the room.

Josephine couldn't help but rise from her seat while stating, "I'm going!"

"Wait, Josephine!" The king gritted his teeth. "If you go, you will definitely die."

"Then, are you going to let them off just like this?" Josephine roared in desperation. While it was rude to the king, no one actually reprimanded her because of the shock they were experiencing.

"Even then... we couldn't do anything without any plan. Making a rash decision is something they want!" The king shook his head. Even he couldn't think of anything. That showed how much of a threat Anna and Noel combined.

Josephine's expression became cold, but she didn't say anything else and just sat down.

The king stated, "We have to investigate Lounstein right now. If they want to develop the city, they will bring in more people, so get ready to send your trusted subordinates into the mix. We need to come up with a plan in less than a week!"

Chapter 887 Building Territory

While everyone panicked from the information they got from the spies, Noel had gathered all the pillars of the family.

There were a total of twelve people sitting down, with Noel and Anna sitting at the tip of both ends as the master and mistress.

Noel said, "Alright. I have made a decision about the shape of the territory. I will be giving you instructions, so let me hear your thoughts on whether it's a good or bad decision. I know that I'm inexperienced as a lord, but I'll definitely do my best to build this territory."

The people in the room nodded their heads. That was the reason why they were here.

"Dimitri. I want you to take care of the immigration. We'll need a lot of people in the territory. While it's impossible to find all the spies, I want you to reduce it as much as possible."

"Understood. How many do you need, Master?"

"As for the number..." Noel glanced at Douglas while pointing at the map. "I want to create a city of this size. These are the four points."

"Actually, Master. I have a unique fort design if you desire." Douglas took out his blueprints, showing a fort that looked far unique compared to the ones he had seen so far.

Instead of a rectangle, the fort looked like a star.

"This is..." Noel frowned.

"I call this a Star Fortress. By taking advantage of these five points and filling up the area with ponds, it will be hard for any sieges or demons to reach it. Due to the pointy edges, we can force the demons to a cone-shaped area where we bombard them from three sides. Although I want to create a hexagram, I believe a star is enough for our territory. We have the natural shield on our west and east, so we'll create a gate toward the south. The demons won't have any choice but to break through from the north and..."

Douglas stopped. Although he was a good architect, he wasn't a good general.

Noel should have understood the advantage of having these pointy edges as well. When Noel took a look at the design, he couldn't help but ask, "Balott?"

"It will definitely be more expensive. But if we can fortify these edges, it's indeed effective. Depending on the pace, our current fund can cover two edges currently... Of course, I have deducted wages, food, and other stuff."

"There should be funds for another two edges soon. As for the rest, we'll use our specialty to gather more funds."

"Understood." Balott nodded in understanding.

"In that case, we'll go with Douglas's design. If that's the case, the five points would be these..." Noel changed the location a little bit. "If we change it this way, how many people can live inside the fortress?"

"Depending on what you need... such as barracks, residential areas, and other stuff. But if I have to assume, it's about ten thousand people. This is going to be a big project. The wall alone requires a few hundred people."

"Can you finish the two edges within two or three months?" Noel asked.

"If that's the case, we need more men... around one thousand people. We have to work around the clock."

"Dimitri!" Noel glanced back as he got the answer for Dimitri.

"Understood. I'll try to find two thousand people at first for both the walls and the early residents of the city."

"Charlotte will supervise everything."

"Understood." Charlotte agreed without hesitation. "I'll definitely manage these people so that there won't be any mistakes."

Harley suddenly raised his hand. "My lord, I believe that we need one district for mine. While it's true that the red-light district is something to be frowned upon, my information network is centered around brothels. If we can get a red-light district, I can gather information inside and outside the cities, depending on the customers. The soldiers can relieve their stress, the townspeople will have fewer worries, and the merchants will enjoy the service. The red-light district is necessary to reduce crime rates."

"I agree." Howard nodded. As a soldier, he obviously knew the state of the city. Since Howard agreed, it would be best to consider Harley's suggestion.

Fortunately, Noel had already prepared the answer. "I know. There will be one, but Douglas will decide the location."

"Understood." Douglas and Harley exchanged looks before agreeing with the arrangement.

"Then...Howard, I want to create a new system for the soldiers." Noel raised one finger and asked, "I want to create an elite soldier with runes on their bodies."

"Huh? Runes on their bodies?" Howard raised his eyebrows, confused.

"Yeah." Noel pointed to the side and said, "Try standing next to me and receive the power of the runes."

Howard followed his instruction and raised both hands.

"I'm not using anything other than the rune itself. This is effective against a Spirit Master, but depending on how you use it, a Spirit Grandmaster could be harmed as well."

"Please."

Noel activated the Rune Blast on his body, and a shock wave shook the entire room.

Dimitri dispelled the blast coming toward the people, while the rest was focused on the fact that Howard actually got pushed back two meters from his original location.

"This is..." Howard looked down. Even though he underestimated it a bit, he still didn't expect this much power coming from runes. "Sir... are you going..."

"Yeah. I'll grant this rune to the people who contribute. This is the new system. People who contribute will receive Honor Points. We'll have several rewards for Honor Points. For now, I can think of several rewards such as money, runes on the body, or weapons."

"That would definitely make the soldiers excited. But how do you get the Honor Points?"

"We'll issue a mission or training regiments. You have to note the people who contribute... While it's true that it's going to be a hassle, you can train them like this, making them independent."

"If you think about it, the people will have to be creative to get the honor points. If this continues, the soldiers will become elites who know what to do without being ordered."

"Yeah. While it's true that monetary reward is one of the things that can be exchanged, we can train elites with less money this way."

"I don't have an objection to the arrangement."

"Alright. I'll give you the details about it later. I'll also draw some runes on your body to demonstrate it to the soldiers."

"Yes, Sir."

After that, Noel turned to Livia. "You and Tristan will learn under me, but at the same time, I want both of you to create the Rune Academy. You will become the principal, and Tristan will assist you. This is going to be a heavy responsibility."

Livia seemed to understand why Noel forbade her from returning to the Greenwood Kingdom. It was indeed a huge responsibility, but the principal had to be the most knowledgeable about runes. It showed that Noel planned to pass everything to her. For the Greenwood Kingdom, this was a priceless opportunity.

Without hesitation, Livia nodded her head. "Understood. Leave it to me."

"Jasmine. How is the area?"

"The lands are fertile. We could stretch the farmland from this place to the foot of the mountain. I have several terraforming projects. If everything goes according to the plan, the territory won't have any problems with food. We can even sell a lot."

"Work with the defense system. It will definitely become a target after all. As for the food supply before the first harvest, it will be handled by Balott."

"Yes, Sir."

"Sir Roel. You should have heard everything. I will be expecting you to provide the necessary equipment. In exchange, I will provide you with various runes to the point where you won't feel bored for the rest of your life."

"Haha. You know me so well, Sir. But since I have become one of the pillars, you don't have to be polite to me anymore. Just call me Roel like everyone else." Roel nodded.

After giving everyone's direction, Noel finally turned to the last person, Anna. "Now that we've announced our engagement, everyone will hear about it sooner or later, especially that former alchemist. It'll be time to formally recruit him in this territory."

"Got it. So, we'll use the pills and the rune academy to generate income to build the rest of the fortress?"

"Yeah." Noel pointed at their location. "We have to create a strong fortress first."

"Of course. We have to defend this land and create a sense of security." Howard nodded in agreement.

"But the Supreme Devil Organization and the Royal Family won't let us off, right?" Charlotte asked.

"Yeah. If we lose, everything will be destroyed. But if we win, we can use that opportunity to promote the security of our fortress. This way, a lot of people will think it's better to live in this territory." Noel nodded.

"With a lot of people filling our territory, we can prosper."

"Indeed. I know that each of you will need subordinates. I allow you to get them yourselves." Noel looked irresponsible, but this was how he showed his trust. By giving them the authority, it would mean that Noel wouldn't place any person who might be a spy under them just to watch their performance. He believed that the pillars would build this territory together.

Noel finally asked one last question. "How long do you need to complete our fortress?"

"The first harvest will take approximately nine months. We have to terraform the lands first after all." Jasmine raised her hand.

"I will make the soldiers ready in one month after we get a new batch of soldiers." Howard looked confident.

"We can operate at any time." Harley made a smug smile.

"In my original workshop, we had a lot of failed products. While I call them failures, they are still better than normal tools. I'll just call someone to bring them to the territory. This should be enough for now." Roel explained his plan.

"I'll need six months to finalize the curriculum and learn more from you," Livia replied with a bit of an unsure tone since she didn't know much about runes.

Last but not least, Douglas. He was the one who would create the territory physically, so he said, "The wall will take one year... No, if we have more people, we can speed it up to nine months. I'm going to finalize the placements of the districts today, but I need a total of two thousand people if we're going to speed things up."

"I'll provide you with all those people as quickly as possible." Dimitri nodded, assuring him.

"Good." Noel stood up. "We'll build this territory properly, making sure that no one can shake it. I believe that all of you can do it... that's the reason why I have no hesitation in choosing the people here as the pillars of my family."

They couldn't help but smile after hearing that praise.

Noel then waved his hand, signaling them to start. "Dismiss!"

Chapter 888 Realization

"Hey, move it here."

"We're going to help with this area."

The people in the town were focusing on their tasks. There were a lot of logs gathered from the entire area, and a few of the house's skeletons had been built.

Douglas was the one supervising every single building. He was alone at this time, but it seemed that he would be fine for a while.

Noel and Anna were walking around the construction site.

"It seems that the city is going along nicely," said Anna while inspecting the buildings.

"Yeah. It's just...Protecting them is going to be tricky. We've bought about two or three months from everyone, but I'm sure that we'll be attacked very soon." Noel narrowed his eyes. He could imagine the destruction that the attack would bring.

After all, with their engagement, the enemies wouldn't treat them lightly anymore.

Anna truly thought that she had caused this trouble. But Noel had made her agree that she wouldn't think that way and never apologized because it was also his decision.

Even with a heavy heart, Anna said, "In that case, should we get a reinforcement?"

"Reinforcement, huh?" Noel thought for a moment. "No. Not yet. If we ask for reinforcement that easily, people will think that we're too weak. It's going to be bad for future negotiations. Instead, we will complete the academy as soon as possible. Even if the rest haven't been built, the academy has to be done."

"Oh?! Are you going to indirectly get the reinforcement from the academy? This way, we won't look too weak."

"Not really. The academy is required for the funds. After fending off the next attack, the people should be able to see that we're strong and have no problems in sending their talented people to us. However, it has another purpose. But I'm still not sure about it yet, so I'm not going to say it now."

Anna looked down. "The next attack would definitely come from the Supreme Devil Organization, right?"

"Yeah. But I'm sure that the Royal Family would be involved in it."

"Now that I think about it, our initial question about whether the Third Prince, the Royal Family, and the Supreme Devil Organization have been answered, right?"

"That's... true." Noel nodded. They had forgotten this question since, at first, they wanted to investigate all this by themselves, only to realize everything was connected once they were big enough to see the entire kingdom.

"With that thought in mind, why would we die together?"

Noel frowned. It was a core question. Why would Noel allow himself to be killed despite knowing everything? That might be the reason why Noel said she was naive.

Something was going on, but Anna couldn't think of anything.

Noel shook his head helplessly. "I don't know. I can't think of any reason why I want to die... After all, I can't reach my goal if I die."

Anna sighed. "Let's drop this matter. We should focus on how to fend off the attacks. The Supreme Devil Organization would definitely cause an outbreak."

"Yeah. To take us down, they're going to bring a lot of Superior Demons too. Is there any Ancient Demon in the mix?" Noel asked.

"Ancient Demon, huh..." Anna scratched the back of her head. "Nothing I know about. There shouldn't be one near our kingdom... if I'm not wrong. I'm not sure if they have sent an Ancient Demon to us or not."

"I see." Noel closed his eyes for a moment, recalling the past. He couldn't help but chuckle, "Still, we've experienced a lot of things, haven't we? In the past, we hid from an Advanced Level Demon. Do you recall that?"

"Yeah. I want to shut your mouth, but because of our position, I..." Anna paused, becoming embarrassed. She didn't notice it at that time, but she buried Noel's face on her breast to shut him up.

"Hoho, recalling that embarrassing moment now?" Noel smirked, teasing her.

"What do you think then?" Anna harrumphed while looking away.

Noel smiled but didn't answer. Instead, he continued, "In just a few years, look at us now. An Advanced Level Demon is not a threat anymore. Our opponents now are the Superior Demon, if not an Ancient Demon."

"Peak Level Demon, Superior Demon, Ancient Demon, and Demon King." Anna agreed. "An Ancient Demon is said to be equal to that of a Spirit Transcendence. However, the Ancient Demon is strong in both influence and power. While the Spirit Transcendence can fight against an Ancient Demon, they could only rally the army to fend off tens of thousands of demons along with a lot of Superior Demons. As for the Demon King, no one really has a depiction of its strength and influence."

"A Demon King, huh..." Noel looked at the sky. Surprisingly, Ardagan gave him a notification this time.

[A Demon King can destroy all four kingdoms at once. Your Ancestor became the greatest general after defeating a Demon King. Their battle caused massive destruction. A mountain was cut in a single swing; a hill turned into a crater in a single stomp.]

Noel widened his eyes in shock, not expecting Ardagan to tell about it personally. Still, Ardagan had accompanied his ancestors in the past, so it could be said that he was a living witness to what happened in the past.

However, the fact that his ancestor could cut a mountain with a single swing shocked him to the core. After becoming a Spirit Grandmaster, Noel could feel how strong he had become.

But he couldn't even imagine what it meant to cut a mountain.

'My ancestor was that strong?' Noel's body shook. He realized that the gap between him and his ancestor was so wide that he couldn't fathom.

Unexpectedly, Ardagan continued raising the bar.

[But his grandmother has been fending off numerous Demon Kings.]

Thud!

Noel's heart sank. If he was talking about the grandmother of his ancestor, it would be the original possessor of Ardagan. There were some records about her being the sister of the Spirit God, but he simply couldn't believe it because humans and spirits were not the same.

Noel fell into deep thought while Anna noticed the change in Noel.

"Noel? Noel?!" Anna shook his body, attempting to wake him up from the shock.

"Ah?!" Noel was startled and soon apologized. "Sorry, I was in deep thought earlier. There's actually a few things I want to ask..."

"Sure. I'll answer those questions to the best of my ability." Anna nodded.

"Before dying, what was our strength?"

"Our strength?" Anna fell silent, doubting this question. Since she had promised him, she had to give the correct answer. "About to reach Spirit Transcendence, but we were basically as strong as a new Spirit Transcendence due to our unique talents."

"As expected..." Noel let out a long sigh.

"Why? What's wrong?"

Noel couldn't answer her. Instead, he thought, 'Ardagan, why would you talk about a Demon King right now when you're normally silent? Is it because of your clairvoyance? Is it because you've predicted that there would be a Demon King coming in the future? Or is it a figure as strong as a Demon King?'

Ardagan didn't reply to him after giving that information.

Noel's expression couldn't help but darken. A lot of possibilities appeared in his mind, which was scarier than the last.

What if a Demon King was involved? What if the Supreme Devil himself had a way to control an Ancient Demon or even a Demon King? What if the reason why he died was so that he could become stronger to face those threats?

However, Noel couldn't help but feel strange about the third possibility. If he died so that he could become stronger, he would have used Old Ru's help on him.

If he regressed, he could become stronger than anyone else. With his brain, he could even use that knowledge to develop his own territory.

Yet, the past Noel actually left that opportunity to Anna, whom he called naive. She didn't even have a lot of information regarding the kingdoms.

He only got more questions than answers.

"Anna..." Noel looked at her in the eyes, his face becoming solemn.

"Yes?" Anna tilted her head in confusion.

"Do you know the key points of this territory? What have I done to this territory?"

"Hmm. There are a lot of things. In fact, one of them is in the nearby mountain. If we go to the other direction of the volcano, you could find a long natural cave with a mining vein in it."

Noel suddenly thought about something. He grabbed Anna's hands and said with a serious expression. "Let's have a date."

"D-date?!" Anna's body shook as her face reddened.

"We're going to tour all those areas. You'll tell me about everything. In exchange... when we return, I'll tell you about myself."

"!!!" Anna suddenly realized what he wanted to do, but she wondered if Noel was never embarrassed to say it this way. He might even get used to teasing her with all these sweet words that he couldn't change any more. She couldn't help but fight back, "Is that how you're going to invite your fiancée for a date?"

Noel was surprised at first but quickly corrected his words. He extended his hand and asked with a gentle tone. "Milady, would you give me the pleasure to bring you on a lovely date?"

"I'd love to." Anna smiled while taking Noel's hand.

But in that instant, Noel pulled Anna to his embrace before suddenly carrying her. "Then, without further ado..."

"W-wait!" Anna subconsciously raised her voice. "We're going to move a lot, so let me change into pants first!"

Since they were just strolling around the town earlier, Anna wore a short sundress, which made her look beautiful and sweet. However, it would be a different case if they were going to run a lot, since the clothes would be hard to move and might even be damaged.

However, Noel actually didn't care and carried her without hesitation. He even added, "You're lovely in that dress."

"You mean guy. You tricked me again! I shouldn't have dropped my guard even with our engagement."

Chapter 889 Hidden Intention

"Hah... You really carried me all the way to this mountain!" Anna panted a few times. Even though she wasn't exhausted physically, she was too tired to react as Noel had been playing with her this whole time.

"It's your fault for losing to me." Noel shrugged while looking away as though he was trying to run away while he was ahead.

"Kh..." Anna gritted her teeth, wanting to berate him, but didn't know what to say. Ultimately, she let everything go for the time being and asked, "So, what do you want to know?"

"You said this mountain has a mining vein, right?"

"Yes. According to the information, the volcano has been inactive for more than a hundred years. But because the demons haven't done anything to the land, the minerals are still trapped within the soil. And more importantly, the lava in the past created a lot of gemstones."

"I see. So, the one eyeing for this mountain must be the Radiant Lord."

"Yeah. He has been gathering all kinds of gemstones and using them as his weapons, so yeah... it's really the Radiant Lord." Anna confirmed it.

Noel thought for a moment. "In our previous life, what do you know about this territory? I should have found the mine and taken advantage of it, right?"

"Previous life?" Anna widened his eyes in shock, not expecting Noel to drop a bomb all of a sudden.

"Come on. Anybody can figure it out sooner or later. I'm just refraining myself to avoid talking about it after knowing the truth from Old Ru." Noel raised one finger. "Don't forget what I said earlier."

Anna recalled that Noel was going to say something important about him. Because they had a draw, it seemed that it was better to disclose everything so that Noel would do the same.

Anna couldn't help but rub her cheek embarrassedly. It turned out Noel was bolder than she originally thought.

"Yes. You did take advantage of it."

"How did I take advantage of it? Do I sell it to the Radiant Lord or..."

"No. You didn't sell it to the Radiant Lord. I believe you used the gems to provide the funds for your territory."

"So, selling it to others... Considering the Radiant Lord's power, he would definitely use that as a bargaining chip or a favor, but other nobles would definitely bring me money." Noel looked down, falling into deep thought.

"Yes. It's just... I think that it's better to consider this properly. Our situation is different now."

"Indeed. That's why I'm planning to sell these gems to the Radiant Lord. Making him owe me a favor should be good enough in our current standpoint."

"If that's your decision, then we can do that. But getting all these gems will require money." Anna raised a problem.

"I know. For now, we can proceed with it, but not too much."

"Just enough to pique the Radiant Lord's interest?"

"Yeah." Noel pointed at Anna. "You were my enemies, so you must have learned a lot about me, right?"

"I want to say it's wrong, but you are not wrong..." Anna was slightly frustrated that she couldn't rebuke that statement. "Are you planning to visit another place?"

"We'll go around the territory. At least, every single place that can be reached within half a day with our current speed." Noel explained.

"If that's the case, there are two more spots you might want to consider. The first one would be the river."

"Is there something special about the river?"

"Well, I couldn't say it's special, but you surely built a dam back then."

"A dam? While it's true that it can bring a lot of benefits, I'm concerned about my brain... If I build a dam, it's going to be a primary target of the enemies. By striking that dam, you can cause a major flood in the city. Or you could go one step further by using poison."

"That's why you also built a water gate."

"Hmm?" Noel seemed to notice something important. "Now that I think about it, the river doesn't directly go toward the city. So, if I want to use the water, I have to create a canal toward this city. But if I create a water gate in a certain area, it will block the water from the destroyed dam. The poison is the same. If I close the gate and use my power to purify the water, it can stop the people from relying on groundwater."

"That's right." Anna nodded in agreement.

"That's not a bad idea to be honest. I will consider it later, and I might have to bring Douglas to inspect the area."

Anna agreed with Noel's decision and finally pointed at the north. "And lastly, the border. Since we're close to the border, you were actually building up posts for explorations."

"Explorations?" Noel widened his eyes in shock.

"Yeah. Well, the city was more mature back then, so I thought it wouldn't be an immediate project."

"Fair enough. Is that all?" Noel asked. If these were the only special things he did, it felt a bit lackluster. In fact, it wasn't enough to handle his current enemies.

Unfortunately for him, Anna nodded her head. "Yes. That was all."

Noel was startled for a different reason. Why would he build these three things in his past life?

Aside from the mine, he didn't think they were that necessary.

"This is weird. Why would I build them? They were not useful to the territory..."

"I don't know. I wasn't smart enough to know the reason back then. In fact, I was so obsessed with you that I didn't even know much about the current situation of the kingdom."

"..." Noel shook his head helplessly. "Sometimes... I couldn't help but ask, what the hell you were doing in your past life..."

"Unfortunately, I've been asking the same question over and over again. Why would you even choose me to return to this time period? Old Ru even said that if we turned back time, it wasn't that the time moved backward. Instead, you were just going to a different world in that period of time. Everything was the same, but that would be the future and your present had become a past that couldn't be changed."

Noel opened his mouth all of a sudden before grabbing Anna's shoulders and shaking her body. "What did you say earlier?"

"Huh? Everything was the same, but that would be the future and your present had become a past that couldn't be changed?" Anna frowned.

"That's it." Noel's expression brightened.

"What? What? I don't understand."

"It means that the me in the previous life was doing something to change the future. Let's think about it this way... I should know that these things are useless. Yet, why would I do it?"

Anna tilted her head in confusion. "Were you trying to annoy the future you? Something like, you both should have realized that these were useless, but because you did it, the current you would notice it."

"That's right. If we're still the same person, then these useless things are trying to give me a message."

"Wait, doesn't that mean..."

"Yeah. The message that travels through time."

"If that's the case, shouldn't you choose yourself instead of me?"

"That..." Noel shook his head with a pained expression. "I'd like to ask that very question... to the point where I wonder if I'm truly smart or just claim that I'm a smart guy while actually not. But I won't ask that today."

"All...right?" Anna didn't quite follow him in that part but continued, "So, what do you find out?"

"Nothing as of now. But if these three things were truly a message, there might be another hidden thing that I've been doing. Well, I'll think about it later, but those three should be important. For now, I will develop the mine..."

"Then, what do you want me to do?"

"You should go with Howard and bond with the soldiers. You don't have a good reputation, so it's better to build it through the soldiers. They're a rough bunch but easier to crack." Noel pointed to the east. "I want you to go to the east and crush all the monsters around the river. After that, go toward the north and inspect the area where I previously built that post."

"Alright. That should be enough for the soldiers to gather enough points to get their early runes on their bodies. It's going to promote our garrison." Anna nodded.

"As much as I want to kill those demons as well, I think it's better to give that task to you."

"You can definitely leave it to me. I'll make sure that the soldiers get experience and won't suffer any casualties." Anna smiled before asking, "That's right. What is the important thing you wanted to talk about earlier? I've told you everything I know about this territory."

"That... will be for later. Once we go back, I'll definitely tell you about it. I want to explore the mine this time. Do you mind?"

"I know you. You are a man of integrity. If you have promised something, then you'll definitely fulfill that promise. So, I don't really mind." Anna shook her head and pointed to the right. "In that case, you should follow me. I know the entrance."

"Hoh? I guess the saying that an enemy knows you more than yourself is true."

"I'm not your enemy anymore."

"I know. Just want to tease you a little bit." Noel chuckled. "Though, it's weird that you know so many details."

Anna fell silent after that, not daring to confess that she actually exploded that dam and destroyed the mine in the past to cause trouble to him. At the same time, her mind was still wondering about the important matter that Noel wanted to talk about.

Chapter 890 Confirmation

"So, this is the mine." Noel carefully looked around. The entrance turned out to be a natural cave. He suspected that this cave was actually a small vent of the previous active volcano that directly connected to the outside. But now that they weren't active anymore, it could connect them to the inside of the volcano.

"Yeah. From my experience, the volcano never erupted again..."

"How long was it?"

"I only know about four years from now though."

"That is enough. In four years, I don't think anyone can challenge us anymore." Noel nodded with a serious expression. He selected the Demon Hunter medal while asking, "Do you sense anything from the inside?"

"My instinct doesn't warn me of anything. I don't think there is a demon nest inside."

"Even though it's a perfect place to create one? This place is filled with minerals..."

"Yes, but if you think about it, the Demon Banner Army first cleared the area and created a new border, right?"

"Ah, I almost forgot about it. Yeah, the Demon Banner Army should have known about this place and cleared it up first." Noel agreed with her statement. Considering both of them had a lot of experience in the Demon Banner Army, they knew that the Demon Banner Army had considered this place.

"Should we go deeper?" Anna asked.

"Sure. I have to make sure this place is safe before sending the people to mine it." Noel nodded.

Both of them smiled and closed their eyes for a second to activate the Moon Blessing.

The cave lit up in their vision as both of them confirmed that they could see each other in this darkness.

"Let's go." Noel waved his hand and continued. The tunnel itself was quite big. It had a radius of three meters, allowing numerous people to come and go.

The rock was extremely sturdy, so they could definitely create a mine here without fearing it would collapse. The problem would be whether the enemies would attack them or not.

"This is going to be a problem." Noel frowned.

"What's wrong?"

"In the past, you should have harbored a lot of hatred for me, right?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"I mean, have you considered attacking this place? In fact, just destroying the entrance is enough to create a lot of chaos and panic." Noel pointed at the back. "Even if I send a lot of soldiers here, they would have a hard time stopping the destruction."

"Unless you are a Spirit Transcendence, I don't think it's possible to destroy the inside of this cave. If you look at the direction, we're going straight into the mountain... So, the weakest part would be the entrance."

"Yes. That's what I'm concerned about."

"Why don't you just reinforce it with runes?" Anna asked.

"Runes, huh?" Noel fell silent. On the one hand, it was a feasible option. On the other hand, he didn't know who he should send to reinforce this place.

Tristan was busy studying under him. Livia was the same, and she even had to plan out the curriculum for the Rune Academy, so she was completely occupied. Roel had to provide a lot of equipment for them, so it wasn't possible to ask him.

In the end, there was only one person who could do it.

"I guess I should do it." Noel sighed. While he looked like he had a lot of free time, he was actually busy. He had to handle a lot of negotiation as well as confirming the plan of every pillar. After all, everything required his permission.

"Or do you want me to do it?"

"Hmm... Harden is not enough to handle the reinforcement. I should get something even stronger." Noel contemplated. "You should know that there are a few levels of runes, right?"

"Yeah. In the previous life, you've introduced three levels of runes: basic, intermediate, and advanced runes. They are differentiated by their complexity as well as the amount of Spiritual Energy. Harden is a basic rune, so it can only withstand up to Spirit Wielder Level or Advanced Level Demon. Mid Level Runes can even inflict serious injuries to Spirit Grandmaster. And the Advance Rune is the most complex thing that can even defeat a Spirit Transcendence."

"Yeah. There are only a few Spirit Transcendence experts in our kingdom, so they shouldn't be dispatched easily. I think about using Mid Level Rune to reinforce this place."

"Hmm..." Anna looked down for a moment as though something was bothering her.

"What? Did I make another decision back then?"

"No. You reinforced the mine with Mid Level Rune. I don't know its name, but it's strong." Anna paused. "It's just... don't you have something more powerful?"

"An Advance Rune? Just so you know, the only Mid Level Rune I have used so far is the Rune Blast. And my mastery in rune is not that deep currently."

"No, I'm not talking about that. I'm saying... There are a few branches for the rune, right? Enhancement Rune, Rune Engineering, Rune Spell, Rune Body, and..." Anna paused, allowing Noel to complete her words.

"Rune Array!" Noel widened his eyes in shock.

He checked his system to confirm his memory. He almost forgot that he hadn't raised the Rune Mastery to the maximum.

Rune Mastery (9/10)

"Rune Array is the combination of all arrays. For example..." Noel pointed at the entrance. "If I use Harden in the entrance, Rune Spell on the outside wall to create some sort of defensive mechanism, Rune Engineering to shoot out objects or move things to trigger another mechanism, while using the Rune Body on the soldiers..."

"Yes. Even if you use only Low Level Runes on all those, you can still beat the power of a Mid Level Rune. But what if you use Mid Level Runes on them?" Anna asked.

"..." Noel fell silent. Even a Spirit Transcendence wouldn't be able to destroy this place easily. For now, the Rune Body might be the easiest to steal, but the embedding method is still unknown. So, even if the people were kidnapped, they wouldn't be able to learn the method.

If he hid the Rune Engineering and Rune Enhancement, unless they studied it properly, no information would be stolen. And lastly, the Rune Spell.

Rune Array was the concept that combined all those concepts into one.

"Still, I will need a lot of blood, at least, Peak Level Demon blood."

"We've received it from the Demon Banner Army. I will also lead the soldiers to hunt demons."

"Fair enough. It'll take time, but it's not like they're going to attack us right away. I should be able to handle it personally."

"That solves it, I guess." Anna harrumphed as though she had made a lot of contributions.

"Yeah. Thank you, Anna." Noel nodded.

"Hmmm, you're pretty honest this time."

Normally, Noel would have a hard time acknowledging her contribution because it would make him look like he had lost to her. In fact, she felt Noel had changed after reaching this territory.

"I'm pretty much honest this whole time. What do you mean?" Noel shrugged.

"Well, I can't deny that, but you never want to acknowledge it."

"Then, I ask you again." Noel pointed at Anna. "Who are you?"

"I am..." Anna was confused and subconsciously wanted to reply with her name, but she felt the hidden meaning in that question and corrected herself, "I am your fiancée."

"That's right. And I am your fiancé. We are building this Lounstein together, so if I don't acknowledge your contributions, am I qualified to be your fiancé?"

Anna couldn't reply to him. However, one word really struck her heart. 'Together,' yes, they were doing this together. Unlike other families who usually ended up with a political marriage, they were different. She was here because her desire and Noel were the same.

It seemed that she was still a bit attached to the past.

"Hehe..." Anna couldn't contain her smile. There was a genuine happiness that sprung from her heart as she kept muttering, "Together...mhmm... together..."

Noel walked closer to her and said with a gentle tone. "Well, you're not wrong about one thing. If I admit it, then it's the same as acknowledging my loss. However, it's fine. We'll go through this together. If I lose to you, I just have to contribute more next time and take back my victory."

"This time, even if we lose, it'll be to each other. There is no Noel or Anna... there is only the Ardagan Family."

"That's right. We're fighting against those people, not each other anymore."

"Yeah. We're still the same. The only difference is that we're on the same side this time..." Anna chuckled. "That's just like us."

"Indeed. That's why, even though this is very embarrassing for me to say, I have to tell you this. With you, I feel like I can do everything in my wildest imagination. You will be able to stand beside me no matter how far I go... Don't you feel the same?"

"I'm lacking a lot of things, and you are the same. But with me here, you are invincible."

"With me here, you are invincible," Noel repeated her words, acknowledging it. At the same time, he reached both of her hands and asked, "Together?"

Anna held his hands firmly and stated with a determined expression. "Together."

They had played, teased, and fought each other a lot. However, today, they confirmed one thing. The frustration they experienced after getting played, the embarrassment, or even the disastrous defeats they had gone through... their enemies were the ones going to experience it.