

S vs Rebirth 921

Chapter 921 Sparring

Noel and Anna were standing outside the town. Since they were going to fight seriously, they had to do it outside if they didn't want to destroy all the things they worked hard for.

"Are you sure about this?" Duke Lorelei asked with a serious expression.

"Yes, Sir. If you're worried about injuring us, we have our own plan. It won't hinder us or anything." Noel nodded.

"In that case, I won't hold back. I won't deal any damage that would last for a lifetime, but I might break a few of your bones in my attack. And you are also free to do the same thing if you are capable of doing that." Duke Lorelei ultimately agreed after a lot of persuasion from Noel yesterday.

"Thank you, Sir. And I hope that there won't be any grudges after this battle." Noel smiled.

"Of course." Duke Lorelei placed his left hand on his scabbard and his right hand on the sword's handle, ready to pull it out.

Anna and Noel pulled out their swords and raised their stances.

As someone who had been chasing after the sword, Duke Lorelei noticed something different from these two.

Her sword felt sharp and mysterious, as though it were waiting for the right time to unleash its might to catch its prey. Meanwhile, Noel's sword appeared to be changing. At first, it looked like a fiery blaze and the next second it was as cold as winter.

"Interesting." Duke Lorelei smirked. He knew that these two were not normal, but not to this extent. It seemed that he would be able to have some fun in this battle. "You both can come at me together!"

Noel and Anna took a deep breath. Their spiritual energy erupted, forming a shock wave that blew away the grass around them.

With just a glance at each other, both of them made the same movement.

They both disappeared from Duke Lorelei's vision.

Duke Lorelei's vision turned left, focusing on Anna. Her speed seemed to be faster than Noel's, so she would be the first one to attack.

But surprisingly, at the very last second, Anna took the step a little too late, causing Noel to catch up.

"!!!" Duke Lorelei was surprised to see Anna changing her pace at the last moment. Instead of blocking only her, Evan had no choice but to block these two youngsters at the same time. He flicked the cross guard, causing the blade to unsheathe a little bit. A sharp energy flowed out of the scabbard and split into two.

They both swung their blades at Evan, but this energy stopped them.

Anna and Noel were startled, but they weren't done just with this. Anna snapped her fingers, forming a rune underneath the three of them.

Evan didn't know what kind of rune this was, but he didn't sense any danger. But the next thing he realized, Noel suddenly split the energy apart and his sword continued moving toward him.

This was actually the same rune Anna used to amplify the soldiers' strengths during the exploration. Noel took this chance to strike him down. At the same time, lightning sparked around Anna as she spun her body, looping around the energy and striking the duke from behind.

'They are truly in sync, but...' Duke Lorelei suddenly ducked down, letting their swords hit each other.

Cling!

The clicking sound surprised Anna and Noel. Seeing how the duke was below them, it was clear that a single slash would end their lives.

That was why Noel used the Fear Emotion in his sword style, amplifying his speed. He then switched the direction of his blade and struck Duke Lorelei from above.

Evan jumped to the side to avoid that slash, noticing the change in Noel's sword again.

"That's an interesting swordplay you have there." Evan started to get fired up. He poured a bit of energy into his sword and shot it out. "Shadow Blade."

Anna and Noel felt danger coming from the front. Even though the duke didn't draw his sword, they felt like the duke had pulled out that sword and released a sword strike.

Both of them hurriedly spun their bodies and struck whatever was coming, matching the timing with their instinct. Lightning covered Anna's sword while Noel activated the Surprise Emotion to amplify the defense.

All of a sudden, they felt friction. Anna's lightning spread around it, revealing an invisible sword strike.

However, their balance was off because of the previous movement, so both of them got pushed back by this sword strike until it ran out of energy.

'What? Even though we're not ready to receive that attack, we are blocking it together.' Noel frowned.

'Yet, he can actually push us this far without even unsheathing that blade.' Anna finally understood the level of the Duke.

In fact, they were at a similar level in their previous lives. But back then, they did have the power to defeat a Spirit Transcendence. It meant that the current duke actually had that kind of power as well. It was no wonder why he could become the strongest Arbiter, only second to the Marshall.

But surprisingly, Noel actually smiled and said, "Duke! That power is amusing."

"Is it?" Duke Lorelei smirked.

They both seemed to have the same intention as Noel actually moved first instead of waiting for Anna this time.

He stopped three meters before the duke and swung his blade.

"!!!" The duke was startled as he instinctively raised the sword to the side. There was a little friction but the power was too low. Even so, what Noel did actually shocked the duke and Anna.

"What? Did you copy..." Anna gasped.

Duke Lorelei noticed a little bit of similarity between his sword and Noel's sword. He couldn't help but say, "If I knew about your talent in the past, I would have made you my disciple."

Noel smirked. What Noel did was actually use the Disgust to create a blunt force. He then swung that blunt force. Unfortunately, this was the first time he did such a thing, so it was too sloppy and didn't pack too much force. In fact, most of the energy was flowing in different directions.

"Follow me if you can." Evan swung downward.

"Y—!" Before Noel could answer, he felt a strike fall right on top of him. So, he hurriedly blocked it with his sword, only to find the energy fly past him, cutting the ground next to him. The force alone actually created a hole a few meters deep.

And Noel had no time to be amazed as an immeasurable pressure suddenly dropped on him.

Bam!

A crater was formed by the pressure alone, knocking Noel to the ground. If not for Noel activating the Reduce Impact Rune on his body as well as summoning the Spiritual Barrier Rune on top of his hand, he would have fallen to his knees.

The crater started to spread, showing the massive force that Noel endured. And the duke created this powerful strike without even pulling out his blade.

"Hahaha!" Noel couldn't help but smile, seeing the amazing person before him. If he were an opponent, he couldn't smile like this, but it was truly a blessing to have this kind of person show him the trick to being a better swordsman.

Seeing Noel in trouble, Anna hurriedly looped around to strike Evan to cancel that power. At the same time, she summoned the Energy Dispersion Rune on top of Noel, trying to free him.

"Your man is not that weak!" Duke Lorelei muttered before striking Anna's blade. This time, he used all his brute strength, launching Anna away. Because she was too far from the rune, she couldn't supply it anymore, resulting in the rune disappearing.

Anna changed her approach by shooting out a lightning dragon toward the duke. And she even attached herself to the dragon as it stopped her momentum before dragging her back toward the duke.

Both Noel and Evan did the same thing.

Evan released another sword strike at the dragon, splitting it into two. Meanwhile, Noel activated the anger and split the pressure apart.

"Good work." Duke Lorelei praised Noel for being able to do such a thing.

"It's because the pressure directly hit me, unlike you who can do it remotely." Noel clicked his tongue. All of a sudden, Noel pulled back his sword as if he were about to thrust Duke Lorelei.

"!!!" Anna was the one surprised, but soon matched Noel's movement in the air.

Both of them thrust their swords at the same time and used the same rune—the Extension Rune.

Their swords expanded to the front, startling Duke Lorelei.

"This power is too mysterious." Duke Lorelei jumped away while striking down the two swords. Even he felt a bit pressured by that attack earlier. If it were a normal Spirit Grandmaster, they wouldn't expect it.

Noel used the Enhance Forward Rune to blast himself forward while Anna gathered the spiritual energy in her sword.

Noel suddenly pointed his hand at Anna and a rune appeared, allowing Anna to land on that rune, slightly delaying her movement.

As a result, Noel reached the duke first and struck him from the side with his Sword Transmutation. Ardagan sucked up a lot of his energy and unleashed it in a single swing.

This was what Dimitri used back then, but he used it horizontally this time. It felt like Noel's blade expanded as the energy started curving. At this pace, it would bend so much that it ended up creating a circle and cutting the duke.

To avoid it, the duke actually took a few steps to the side, only to realize it was Noel's aim the whole time. After all, he was right beneath Anna.

Anna stabbed the platform with both hands. "Lightning Executioner!"

The lightning concentrated on Anna's sword was unleashed.

"You got me." Evan smiled and actually raised his other hand to catch the lightning with his bare hand.

"What?!" Anna gasped. No one had ever caught her lightning just like that.

"This is the difference between both of you and me. Do you think that this is my only weapon? No, everything I have is my sword, including my body." Duke Lorelei simply explained that his hand was also considered a sword. And that sword just clashed with her lightning before tossing it to the side, causing a massive explosion.

Noel took this chance to spin his body and kick Duke Lorelei, only to be blocked by his scabbard again.

However, Noel actually used his rune this time.

"!!!" The Duke felt something was wrong as a force suddenly kicked his entire body into the air and caused him to land more than ten meters away from him. "Seriously, the runes are mystical to the point where I can see how our race will defeat the demons in the future."

"Then, you can experience it first hand!" Noel formed the Rain of Light Rune above Evan's head.

Seeing the incoming energy balls that were about to fall on top of him, Duke Lorelei actually pulled out his blade halfway and unleashed an extraordinary might.

He swung downward, causing the energy to split the rune before it could release its attack before falling to the ground. Surprisingly, the moment it touched the ground, the energy expanded and ran toward Noel. The energy was so violent that the eruption created a wall-shaped trail as high as two meters.

Anna suddenly landed in front of Noel while striking this energy with her lightning sword. "I'll stop this!"

The clash between them caused a massive shock wave that could be felt by the people on the wall one hundred meters away.

"Hiding behind a woman?!" Duke Lorelei taunted Noel with a cheeky smirk.

"No. I simply trust her." Noel looped around Anna and let his blade slide on the wall-shaped trail. The trail suddenly started to freeze and the movement he completed his swing, a line of ice continued moving forward, freezing the entire trail.

This was Ice Infusion. In the past, Noel only utilized it by expanding the ice, but after training with Raincart, he could expand that ice while freezing everything around it.

The ice was moving on the trail's surface and continued until it reached the end of the trail before erupting, forming a long spike toward Duke Lorelei.

Unfortunately, it was one meter short of reaching him.

"Amazing." Duke Lorelei smiled.

Chapter 922 Realization

"Amazing." Duke Lorelei smiled.

"Tsk. It's still too short." Noel clicked his tongue. He thought he could reach him this time, but his control wasn't at that level yet.

"To think it would need our rune and abilities for him to draw his sword halfway. It seems that we have to go all out for him to fully unsheathe that sword." Anna stood next to him, ready for the second round.

"That's right. If you have the ability, force me to fight you seriously." Duke Lorelei provoked them again, showing that he was nowhere near his peak.

Noel and Anna exchanged looks. They seemed to reach a tacit understanding about their next plan.

The Empowerment Rune in their body got activated, boosting their physical abilities. The surge of strength was noticeable even by the Sword Arbiter.

In that instant, both of them disappeared. Their movement was much faster than earlier, startling him.

The Duke took a deep breath, sending them with his Spiritual Energy instead of his eyes. One of them got caught by the Spiritual Energy and the Duke immediately jumped toward this person, which turned out to be Noel.

Circular Sword Strike.

Noel waved his sword, creating a circle around his body. The Duke ended up striking this circle, which soon expanded, pushing the duke back.

The duke slightly closed his body so that he could gain another surge of strength from his lower body before using it to break the circle apart.

After that, he closed in to lure out Anna.

All of a sudden, Noel smiled as though everything had gone according to the plan, causing the duke to be wary. His sword ended up hesitating, allowing Noel to push him back with his swing.

The duke never thought he would fall for such a trick at this age.

"You youngsters are really good at giving this old man a heart attack." Duke Lorelei smirked.

"It's not enough." Noel stomped the ground with his Rune Blast, crashing the ground underneath them. With this, they would have to fall for at least one second.

The Duke understood this kind of movement. After all, Anna immediately approached him from behind once the duke lost his foothold. She would definitely take this chance.

Unfortunately for the duke, Noel hadn't done it yet. He created an Enhance Forward Rune to the duke.

"!!!" The duke widened his eyes in shock. He could feel the energy from the rune trying to affect him, but because he had never experienced this before, he was too late in releasing his energy to resist the control of the rune. As a result, the Enhance Forward Rune tossed him in Anna's direction, closing the gap between them.

Noel also jumped forth, surrounding the duke. His black flame gushed out of his body and formed a giant avatar behind him.

"Come forth, Flame Devil."

'Is he going to attack both of us together? No, from what I can see, he is loyal, so...' The duke thought about it instantly and ended up throwing the sword to Anna.

"!!!" Anna struck this sword but failed to knock it down.

However, she had done enough just to hold the sword here so that the Sword Arbiter wouldn't be able to stop Noel's attack.

But to everyone's surprise, the reason why he tossed the sword to Anna was because he wanted her to stop it. This way, he rotated his hand and reached out for the sword behind his shoulder. It was at this moment that the duke drew his sword.

"No!" Anna tried to release more strength, but it was too late. The energy that had been contained within the scabbard was released at once, knocking her back.

At the same time, the duke swung the sword above his head and released the residual energy to split the Flame Devil in half.

Even Noel had to withstand the massive energy that fell upon him. That massive energy created another wall-shaped trail that stretched for over thirty meters. If he ever unleashed this kind of attack inside the town, numerous people would have lost their lives and houses.

And Noel who had to withstand all this power ended up breaking the ground underneath him as blood started to flow out of his mouth.

"Haaaa!" Noel roared as he used the Sword Transmutation and released it upward. The Sword Transmutation ended up knocking the sword energy from the duke and flew into the sky before

destroying each other. The destruction caused a shock wave loud enough to be heard by the people inside the town and strong enough for the gust to destroy all the grass within ten meters radius.

"Ha... Ha..." Noel panted a few times, finally understanding the strength of the Sword Arbiter. "So, this is the number one Arbiter, who is known to be unparalleled under Spirit Transcendence."

"He finally draws his sword." Anna smirked. While she wasn't injured, her hands still felt numb from the energy released by the sword earlier.

Noel took a deep breath, looking at the duke's sword. A normal person wouldn't have noticed anything special, but Noel could see how the energy flowed in that sword. It was so smooth as though it had memorized the duke's control.

It was something different from Ardagan, who was a living spirit. But when he thought about it, Ardagan was just a normal sword if he ignored his consciousness as a spirit. He had been living in this world for too long as a normal sword.

During their battle earlier, Noel noticed something. The duke had been releasing the energy contained in that sword, but had he actually controlled his energy this whole time? If he didn't have to control his energy and just let it flow as the sword had memorized it, wouldn't it mean he could focus on anything else other than controlling the energy?

When he thought about it, he looked at Ardagan again and asked inwardly, 'You have known me for so long, do you think it's possible?'

[Yes. But don't forget that I'm only responsible for following your usual reaction.]

'If that's the case...' Noel smiled, realizing that he could do something else. "Duke Lorelei. If you don't mind, could I try something?"

"Hmm?" The duke furrowed his eyebrows. It seemed that Noel had noticed something, so he permitted it. "If it's interesting, then sure. But if it's not, I'm going to attack you."

Noel nodded with a serious expression. He gathered the energy in Ardagan while utilizing the 'Anger.'

In the past, he had to control this energy, causing him to be unable to do anything else other than swinging his sword. Now that he had defined the kind of anger he wanted to have after the sparring with Anna, Ardagan should be able to control that flow of energy just by following the program he had set earlier.

It allowed Noel to be able to do something that he couldn't do before, especially a sword technique.

That was right. Noel was using the Sword Transmutation, gathering a massive amount of energy. It looked like a normal Sword Transmutation until Noel swung the sword.

The Sword Transmutation ran through the ground, smashing everything around it. Its power at least doubled, and there was a different kind of sharpness in this strike. This was the combination of the Sword Transmutation and Noel's Anger.

"!!!" The duke struck the energy, planning to cut it apart. Yet, the sword strike actually pushed him back until he reached Anna's position before the duke understood the energy a bit better and cut it apart.

Since Noel had requested the duke earlier, she didn't do anything other than watching the duke. But even she was surprised by this level of attack.

'Isn't this... the same sword strike that Noel used in his previous life? So, that's how it is... Duke Lorelei was the trigger to stimulate the growth of his unique sword style.' Anna couldn't help but remember Noel's Everchanging Sword Style.

Each swing was so powerful, yet had a different purpose. Even she had a hard time discerning what kind of attack he would unleash.

"It seems that you've gotten a hint of where to step to go forward." Duke Lorelei smiled.

"It's thanks to you, Sir. If I couldn't see your sword, I wouldn't have noticed this."

"But don't forget that this is the first sparring. What is the objective of this spar?"

Noel's expression turned serious as he raised his blade again. "Yes, Sir. I apologize for my actions earlier."

That was right. This was the first sparring, which would be seen by the spies. This improvement would be recorded as well. Evan could tell them that this was just a repayment for the injury, but if Noel improved any further, it would be seen as Evan training these two youngsters. His stance would be questioned by his allies.

Hence, they had no choice but to end this sparring as quickly as possible so that the spies could report to them and Noel could learn a bit more about this newfound ability.

Although it was a shame, he had to do it.

"In that case, let's end this battle within ten minutes." Noel took a deep breath. The temperature started to go down as the gentle breeze turned into a chilling wind.

Anna noticed this power and hurriedly did the same. Her hair started to change its color as the lightning began to cover her entire body.

If they wanted to make the spies believe them, they had to do this much.

All of a sudden, the energy from within their bodies erupted as both of them said a similar thing.

"Awaken! Ice Transformation (Lightning Possession)!"

Chapter 923 Serious

"Awaken! Ice Transformation (Lightning Possession)!"

A pair of ice wings appeared on Noel's back and an ice crown hovered above Noel's head. Anna had her eyes and hair turn white as the lightning covered her entire body.

Evan couldn't help but smile in excitement. This was what he had been waiting for. Their strength was amplified and it was clear that there was no side effect from using it.

And as he expected, since both of them were working together, Noel also had the same ability.

"There is no holding back," Noel said while stabbing the ground with his sword.

Ice crystals began to emerge from the ground. They continued expanding as more and more appeared, moving to the duke's location.

"Of course." Evan smiled while lowering his sword. His expression turned solemn as though he were treating Noel as his equal in this fight.

The moment the ice crystal was about to reach him, Evan took a step forward, striking the ice crystal. The swing sliced the ice crystal like paper and that slash actually released a horizontal strike that flew toward Noel.

"Huh?" Noel was surprised because the sword energy was avoiding all the ice crystals on its path and ultimately hitting him. Noel had no choice but to deflect that energy with his sword.

However, Evan wasn't done yet. He actually moved forward and slashed more and more ice crystals. Every single slash launched the same sword energy.

Noel had to block all these sword strikes because, when he tried to avoid them, the sword energy curved once more and chased after him.

And the more sword strikes that landed on him, the closer the duke became.

In just three seconds, the duke had actually gone halfway and Noel couldn't actually escape from his position.

Noticing that he was in trouble, Anna appeared from the side and struck him, only to find it meeting the duke's sword. He had been waiting for Anna because the energy in his sword turned violent the moment the two swords clashed.

Anna wasn't losing either. Her lightning energy clashed with the duke's violent, sharp energy.

The moment it reached the duke, it electrocuted the duke's hand to make it numb and weaken his grip. At the same time, the momentum Anna carried earlier pushed Evan three meters away.

The duke looked at his hand as lightning sparked multiple times, creating some small wounds.

However, Anna wasn't in good shape either. The violent energy reached her hand, shredded apart her sleeve, and left some wounds.

Now that some wounds had begun to appear, the fight had gotten serious.

Still, Anna's attack gave Noel time to recover. He hurriedly rushed to the duke and struck him from above.

Bam!

The duke stopped it with his blade, but the force Noel used actually pinned the duke to the ground and even turned the soil underneath it into a crater.

When the duke was about to release his energy, the temperature dropped even further.

"Frozen Domain!"

Noel activated the new ability he got from the Ice Transformation.

"Hmm?!" Evan noticed that the temperature was so low that he thought he was in the middle of a snowstorm. He had to use a bit of his Spiritual Energy to create a mantle to keep him warm. But the most shocking thing was the fact that Noel could manipulate the entire area. "A domain ability?!"

Noel answered him with his action. Because the temperature was low, Noel just had to pour a bit more Spiritual Energy to activate the Spiritual Cold Control in order to form ice crystals next to him.

"Bloom!"

The moment Noel said those words, the ice crystals expanded.

Evan had no choice but to grab his scabbard and swing it toward Noel.

"!!!" Noel was startled for a second, but he remembered that the duke used everything as his sword. So, it was normal for the duke to use the scabbard as an additional sword.

Unfortunately for Noel, he still had to spin his body and strike this scabbard to avoid getting injured.

But the scabbard didn't actually aim at him. Instead, the duke used it so that he could create a gale that spun around him like a tornado, shattering the ice crystals.

Noel was simply engulfed by it for a second and landed several meters away with some injuries.

"I have to do something with that sharp energy." Noel muttered but soon smiled as he prepared another trick for that last attack.

It was the duke's turn to be shocked because his hands felt ice cold. When he lowered his gaze, there was actually frostbite on his right hand. It seemed that Noel had sent his energy to him at the last moment to freeze this hand.

'Both of them are impressive. Anna Stargaze reacts and moves one step faster, but Noel Ardagan has more brute force than her. If they can grow further, no one in the kingdom will be able to shake the Ardagan Family.' Evan thought.

On the one hand, if he killed them right away, there wouldn't be any threat anymore and it also fulfilled the royal family's wish. On the other hand, he didn't want to do it because they were the future and Noel didn't seem to be a person who would kill for petty things.

In the end, Evan chose the latter. He muttered, 'In that case, let me give you a present for the future of this kingdom.'

Anna approached him fast. She had even sheathed her sword, concentrating her energy.

Evan also sheathed his sword as if planning to do the same thing.

When Anna was about to reach him, Evan said, "That technique is good, but you are still too slow!"

Anna frowned but still completed her ability. "Raging Lightning Descend."

"Sword Draw."

Both of them pulled out their swords at the same time and struck each other.

Boom!

The clash of energy shook the entire field. The people on top of the wall could even feel the vibration.

It ended in just a second, but when the dust settled down, they could see that there was shattered ground behind the duke. But on the other side, there were multiple deep sword marks left on the soil.

Anna suddenly coughed up blood and fell on her knee. Multiple sword wounds suddenly appeared all over her body, and the worst one was on her right thigh and the right waist.

Anna couldn't help but recount what happened earlier. When they drew their blade, their speed was the same. But the energy flowing out of their sword was different.

Anna was actually one step too late. As a result, the energy coming from the duke's blade was able to disperse her energy before it was unleashed completely. And the residual energy reached her body.

The wound on her waist was a bit deep and would bleed a lot, but it didn't strike her vitals. On the other hand, the one on her thigh was actually troublesome because it actually cut her muscle. In other words, she wouldn't be able to use her right leg anymore in this battle.

"Your sword emphasizes speed and your lightning provides the penetration force. You have controlled the lightning well, but your speed can't keep up." Evan gave a piece of advice to Anna before turning to Noel, who rushed to him as soon as he saw Anna was heavily injured.

Evan didn't do anything special this time. He just swung his sword to match Noel's movement, but he noticed that Noel's strength had grown again.

Noel had used the Cold Empowerment that boosted his ability in the cold. But it wouldn't last long since he had to maintain the Frozen Domain and Cold Empowerment at the same time.

Noel also tried multiple emotions to see what actually worked, but as expected, he had just grasped the edge of the Everchanging Emotion Sword Style's potential.

Evan asked, "Your sword is unique and always changing. However, don't forget that if it ends up becoming foreign to you, how do you even use it?"

Evan indirectly implied that Noel might have accepted the change in those emotions and defined them. But if those emotions were generated from random things, he wouldn't be wielding his sword anymore. In fact, it was just an unknown sword with mysterious power. There was no way he could master that sword.

"The only thing that will last forever is the change itself. Humans will change, our hearts will change, and our hatred might change into love. That's why this is my change!" Noel shouted as he stepped back.

The ice began to cover his entire sword. The moment Noel waved it, the ice cracked and split into five before flying toward Evan.

"!!!" Evan noticed something in these five and expanded the spiritual energy around his sword like that of a shield before striking them down.

The ice was extremely sharp and flew in five directions as though. Instead of a single sword strike, Noel actually amplified the power by combining this attack with the Ice Lotus Ability he had been using this whole time.

Those five ice parts turned into five slashes that soon expanded in all directions to create a star. And when they reached the tips, all the sword strikes blossomed into beautiful ice crystals.

Noel had used the Sword Transmutation to power up his Anger Emotion, and this time, he amplified the Distress Emotion to create a powerful slash like this. It was perfect to reflect the meaning of Desperate contained in Distress Emotion.

Evan said, "The core of your power is your unique power as well as that brute strength. However, to completely master your power, you need to create it as solid as possible like this."

Evan sent forth another sword strike like the previous attack that left a huge trail behind. But it wasn't as big as it was before as though Evan had exhausted too much of his power and didn't have enough power to unleash a full strike.

Noel gathered all his strength into his sword before releasing the Sword Transmutation to overpower Evan's ability.

Noel's attack actually came with more intensity as he had grown more accustomed to this new ability. But that was why the gap between them could be shown when the two sword strikes clashed.

"A sharp axe can chop down a thick tree. Unless you can condense that tree into something even denser or solid, you won't be able to stop the axe."

As Evan said those words, his sword strike broke apart Noel's Sword Transmutation which carried far more energy than him.

"!!!" Noel had no choice but to stop it with his sword, but this attack was simply too strong. He was pushed back for more than thirty meters just to stop the momentum and the residual energy was actually still solid enough to crush him.

The residual energy actually cut Noel from his right shoulder to below his left chest.

"Gah." Noel spat a mouthful of blood. He hurriedly covered that wound with his ice to stop the bleeding, but that strike was almost fatal for him. He started losing his grip.

"I guess this is it." Evan sighed, thinking about bringing this battle to a close.

"Wait a moment. Just one more time." Noel stopped him and straightened his posture even though he was clearly shaking from the deep wound.

"Come on. You won't be able to wield your sword for at least two or three months with that kind of injury." Evan shook his head helplessly.

"No, Sir. Please let us do it." Anna stood up with the help of her sword. Even though she could only move one of her legs, her fighting spirit hadn't wavered.

"You too. All those injuries are small, but I've cut your muscle, so you won't be able to move properly for a while. I don't want to leave any big injuries that would leave a scar on this guy's future wife."

"Please, Sir. One more time." Noel and Anna said the same thing, their expression looked adamant.

Noel had gathered his energy one more time and held the sword with both hands. It felt like he was about to grasp something.

Anna also covered her body with lightning once more, but those lightning gradually moved toward her hands and swords as though she were leaving the rest vulnerable to enhance her speed.

Looking at their determinations, Evan thought it would be rude if he rejected them. He said, "Alright. This is your request. Come at me with all you have."

"Thank you, Sir." Both Anna and Noel thanked him before activating the Enhance Forward Rune on their body. This way, they would move at the same speed and attack Evan together.

Evan lowered his sword for a moment, letting the energy flow down to the ground. The grasses all around him were sliced multiple times.

"Come!"

Noel couldn't make his attack as solid as Evan, but there was 'Disgust' that reflected a blunt force from a sword. He was planning to use this massive energy to create it and condense that energy as much as possible.

Meanwhile, Anna also knew that her energy was one step too late. It couldn't be improved instantly, so she chose to increase her movement speed as much as possible. Even if her energy was too late, she still moved one step faster so that the energy could be released at the same time.

Evan met the determination of these two youngsters with his best ability.

"One Sword Cut A Million."

Chapter 924 Khalid

Boom!

The explosion this time was bigger than anything everyone had seen so far. It engulfed more than fifty meters in radius, destroying everything within it.

The cloud dust rose into the sky and alarmed all the people. When they began to settle down, the soldiers on top of the wall could see two big sword marks that actually stretched for over two hundred meters behind the dust.

It was obvious who created it, and that person was standing in the middle of the field with two people lying unconscious.

The winner was none other than Duke Lorelei. He let out a sigh, "To think I would have to use every bit of my power to suppress them."

Evan turned around, looking at the two kids on the ground. There were numerous shallow cuts on their bodies. It would be hard to take care of their injuries like this. But there were some broken bones and muscle tears to the point where they wouldn't be able to recover for at least four to six months.

This was much worse than he originally thought. But it also showed the kids' potential.

"Seriously, the younger generation this day is terrifying." Evan shook his head helplessly. It looked like he was fine, but the next second, his hand dropped his own sword as lightning sparked around his arm.

The lightning spark actually inflicted enough damage to stop him from wielding his sword and an ice crystal bloomed like a flower on his back, causing an internal injury. Blood began to flow out of his mouth.

He never thought that two kids who had just become a Spirit Grandmaster managed to push him this far.

"It's over, I guess." Evan's killing intent started to spread in all directions.

However, that killing intent wasn't directed to Noel and Anna. Instead, this killing intent was protecting them from anyone that dared to harm them after this point. After all, people like Josephine or assassins from the Supreme Devil Organization could do it.

"..." The people in the shadows had no choice but to swallow their desire for a moment and tried to find the right time to kill these two kids before they grew too big.

After their presence disappeared, Evan picked up his sword with his other hand and carried Noel and Anna with his Spiritual Energy.

When they reached the gate, the soldiers, including their captain, came out to check Noel and Anna.

"This is..." Grandell gasped. He glared at the Sword Arbiter and shouted, "Why are you so vicious? They won't be able to move their body for at least a few months with this kind of injury."

"They should be glad that I hold back. If not, they would have died." Evan snorted, showing no sign of remorse.

"You..." Grandell gritted his teeth. He wanted to do something, but treating them would be the highest priority.

"You should bring them back. While it's not enough to kill them, they will die if you don't treat them right away!"

Grandell had no choice but to bring back Noel and Anna. Some people actually saw Anna and Noel's injuries and started to hate the Sword Arbiter.

Meanwhile, Evan remained silent the whole time and kept watching out for them to make sure that there was no ambush. Unless there was a Demon Saint here, they shouldn't be able to get past him. And if there was one, the Demon Saint would have been discovered due to their strength.

So, Noel and Anna were safe. That was enough for Evan. He didn't intend to save his face after accepting Noel's agreements anyway.

As soon as they were brought into the room, Grandell hurriedly turned around while saying, "Where is the doctor? He is too late."

"You don't have to call the doctor anymore. I have come here to treat my lord and the future mistress." A middle-aged man walked down the hallway with a bag that kept releasing a clicking sound.

"Hmm?!" The Sword Arbiter couldn't help but raise his eyebrows. "You... Did they actually recruit you?"

"Well, isn't this the old man from the Sword Family?" The middle-aged man smiled calmly.

"So, their confidence comes from you." Evan pinched the bridge of his nose, realizing that Noel had prepared all this. "To think that they managed to invite the former Royal Alchemist Khalid."

Before coming here, Noel had sent out two letters. The first one was for the Sword Arbiter, but the second one was actually for Khalid. Yes, he was the only pillar that hadn't gone to the main city.

According to their agreement, Khalid had remained in the Stargaze Family's territory. But after realizing that the two had completely fooled the world and Noel was the mastermind, he could see the future in the Ardagan Family.

The moment Noel became an Earl, he instantly fulfilled his promise and swore his allegiance to Noel.

That was why Khalid had now formally served the Ardagan Family.

"While I don't have any healing ability, I have enough medicine to heal them. Though, it won't be an instant for them." Khalid said, "Other than the old sword and the two injured people, everyone can't stay in the room."

"Who—" Grandell didn't know Khalid, so he obviously couldn't allow this person to enter.

However, Khalid actually tossed a badge to him. This badge had the symbol of the Ardagan Family, but the silver color that made the badge indicated his status as a high-ranking officer of the Ardagan Family. In other words, the one standing in front of him was one of the pillars.

The badge was just distributed not long ago, so there was no way people could counterfeit it right away. And when he poured the Spiritual Energy into it, the rune would react, showing that it wasn't a fake badge.

"I apologize. Are you one of the pillars?"

"Pillar of Medicine, Khalid is the name. So, tell the soldiers to watch around and make sure no one disturbs us."

"Understood." Grandell nodded furiously. The spies would definitely use this time period to either assassinate Noel and Anna or send the information to the ones behind them. Since the Sword Arbiter protected them, they ended up with the latter.

"Alright. Let's see the wounds." Khalid scanned Noel and Anna's bodies.

"Don't worry. At least, I'm considerate enough not to injure her in those areas." The Sword Arbiter muttered.

"What are you saying? Do you think I will care about that? Though, the maids still have to change their clothes later." Khalid took out a small glass jar that contained a green-colored salve. "The biggest injury would be this one."

Khalid was looking at the deep wound on Noel's chest. Without hesitation, he took out a water bottle and controlled the water with his Spiritual Energy, washing all the blood away. After that, he covered the wound with the salve.

Anna's injury was also serious, but the only wound he used this same salve was the one on her thigh. It was harsh to have her muscle cut like that, so he treated it as quickly as possible.

After that, Khalid took out a container with a blue salve. He actually applied the smaller wounds with this salve.

As soon as he was done, he used the water to instantly wipe out the salve. To Evan's surprise, the wound instantly disappeared.

"Amazing..." The Sword Arbiter never thought that an alchemist could actually heal them this way.

But he wasn't done yet. He ground a few pills and mixed it into the water before using the Spiritual Energy to direct them into Anna and Noel's mouths, allowing them to digest the medicine.

Their breathing was instantly stabilized and their complexion improved drastically.

"This should be enough. The small wounds aren't that much of a problem, but the big wounds will definitely take more time, three to seven days, I presume."

"Will it leave a scar?" Evan asked.

"Depending on their recovery. Considering they are Spirit Grandmasters, there should be no scar as long as they wake up within the next twenty four hours and start mending their skin and muscle." Khalid explained.

Evan was astonished by the healing ability of all this medicine. It was to be expected from a Royal Alchemist.

Khalid took out two blue pills and one red pill along with a pale blue salve. "The blue pills should be enough to enhance your recovery metabolism for your internal injuries. The red pill is to supply some Spiritual Energy, and you should apply the salve to your wound. It's the downgraded version of this one."

Khalid was pointing at the blue salve that used to close the wounds instantly.

"I'm not going to receive that one?"

"What do you mean? It's hard to gather the materials for all this salve. Of course, they are for the lord and his future wife. You should be grateful that I give you that one instead of the normal salves that normal soldiers would use." Khalid shrugged.

"Hahaha." Evan chuckled and hurriedly swallowed the pills.

The moment the red pill entered his stomach, he could feel that it was melting and his heart beat rapidly, producing more Spiritual Energy for a moment. In just a minute, he managed to recover a tenth of his Spiritual Energy.

The other pills boosted his metabolism and the Spirit Mind had less stress in fixing the internal injuries. After that, the salve would close his wounds within an hour or two.

Even though he wasn't a healer, it was still amazing to see how his medicine let them recover easily.

As soon as they were done, they brought a maid who didn't have any Spiritual Energy within their body to ensure the safety of Noel and Anna. She changed their clothes carefully and respectfully as she was also one of the people whose life was greatly affected by Noel's visit.

The Sword Arbiter never left their side for a moment, ensuring that the two kids were safe. Meanwhile, Khalid ended up waiting for a few more days just because he wanted to see this town more closely. Just like the Sword Arbiter, Khalid wanted to see the potential the runes could bring to their lives.

As Noel predicted, the spies instantly confirmed the news about their condition.

"They are severely injured. Four to six months."

The spies began to send the message to their masters, informing them that Noel and Anna wouldn't be able to do anything for a few months. Since Anna had been moving around with her board, there was a potential that they could still move around, but it was impossible to train with that kind of injury.

That was why this should be good news for their masters. Obviously, people also wanted to assassinate them, but with the Sword Arbiter not allowing more injuries, they would have to clash with Evan if they wanted to assassinate Noel and Anna.

There was actually one more person standing on top of a tree a bit far away from the city. She was Josephine.

"The Sword Arbiter is indeed scary. I want to kill them right now, but he doesn't leave any gaps for me to exploit. I guess I have to discuss the matter with that person. It's not like they can recover easily from those wounds. Oh, we also have to block all the medical personnel, especially Clara since she was his superior in the past."

Josephine ended up tearing the space with her scythe and teleported somewhere.

Unbeknownst to them, everything was just a setup. In fact, it didn't take long for Noel and Anna to recover, let alone waking up.

Two hours after their treatment, Noel was the first one to open his eyes.

"Mhmm?" He let out a soft moan and saw the duke on the corner of his eyes. "It seems that I have failed."

"You brat. Do you know how shocked I was when you unleashed that technique? Both of you are truly monstrous. But what is scarier is how far ahead you could see."

"Well, the first part is completed, I guess?" Noel smiled. "Time for the next plan."

Chapter 925 Suspicion

"How is your condition?" Noel asked Evan.

"I'm still fine. Thanks to the medicine, I think I can recover in just a day. How about you?"

"Hmm..." Noel checked his body once again and tried using his Force Control to speed up the progress of his recovery. Because the nerve had to be repaired, he tried to focus on creating those nerves and veins one at a time. He roughly calculated the amount of time needed and said, "Two or three days."

"That's good. I guess it's time to kill the spies." Evan nodded.

"There are a total of seven spies. You should ask Grandell about them." Noel explained.

"How do you know?" Evan frowned, expecting that they had to wait for the spies to release a bird or send a message in one way or another to identify them.

However, Noel had one thing that no one possessed: Affection Medal. Due to the Affection Medal, he could see their hearts as well as a brief description of their affection for him. This was another way for Noel to find the spies in his territory.

This was also another reason why Noel actually asked everyone to retrieve water from them.

He was scanning each person's affinity when they came. And every time he found one, he would ask Grandell to note them and investigate those people.

"That's my secret." Noel chuckled, not planning to expose this secret.

"Well..." Evan shrugged in understanding. "Alright then. After you recover from your injury, you will be sparring with me in the morning and I can do whatever I want after that."

"Yes. Sorry for having you take their anger."

"It's fine. This is a part of the agreement."

After making sure Noel was fine, Evan left the room with his medicine. Meanwhile, Noel's head turned to Khalid. "Thank you for coming here and helping us."

"It's not a problem. I am the Pillar of Medicine of the Ardagan Family, after all."

"Still, your medicine is extremely effective. Even if I don't do anything, I can recover just fine within one week from this kind of injury."

"That's obvious. I might not be a healer, who can perform miracle stuff that only spirits can do, but I am an alchemist who pursues the path of medicine. I have administered a drug to reduce the pain, but it will wear out in two to three hours, so brace for the pain."

"Besides, the previous civilization didn't have any al abilities, so they helped their patients by using medicine and special treatment based on what was recorded."

"Got it. Are you going to the main city after this?" Noel asked.

"Maybe after you fully recover. But I'm not entirely sure because you are a reckless person. There is a chance that you will be injured like this, so I might have to remain by your side and go to the main city together." Khalid explained.

Noel nodded. "Still, I have told you previously that I will help you procure more medicine from the previous civilization. And if you think that there is a rune that can help you better or improve the tool you use, you may ask me about it. I will check whether it's possible or not."

Khalid's expression turned serious. "For me, I wish to create a miracle drug that will etch my name into history. I can see that happening with the Awakening Pill, but I won't stop there. I feel like I can achieve an even higher feat by following you, so I hope that you don't disappoint me."

"I will respect your wish. If you think that there is a better master out there, I won't stop you from going. However, I am confident that you will need me the most."

"We'll see about that." Khalid smiled. He examined Anna for a moment before saying, "She should be waking up soon. Please tell her that she has to use her Spiritual Energy to boost the recovery as quickly as possible to avoid leaving any scars. That applies to you too, my lord."

"Got it. Do we need to remain here until we are fully recovered?"

"Of course not." Khalid tossed two bottles of pills. The first bottle contained yellow-colored pills while the other had a cube-shaped pill. "The yellow pill can reduce the pain a bit. Eat one every six hours if the pain is unbearable. You can also move around your body as long as you don't make a big movement. The other pill is for boosting your recovery rate. This is much more potent than the one I gave to that old man, so you put it in a water glass first and let it dissolve before drinking it. One every twelve hours."

"Thank you."

"Since I'm done here, I'm going to look around the town. I'm curious about what kind of town you are planning to build here. Besides, it will give an idea of what kind of tool I can request from you in the future."

"Sure. Take your time." Noel nodded. Although it would be good to wait for Anna, he believed he should test the efficacy of this pill before letting her drink it.

Hence, Noel grabbed a glass on the side table and exchanged for a Water Bottle from the system.

As soon as the cube-shaped pill entered the water, it started releasing bubbles and turned the clear water into the same color as the pill.

After it dissolved completely, Noel tried to drink it bit by bit, noticing the change in the flow of his energy. It felt like the flow became much smoother.

The recovery process became much quicker, and that boost didn't come only from the energy, but also from the natural recovery of his body.

It was no wonder why Khalid said it was more potent. If he took this directly, the recovery rate would be so overwhelming that his body wouldn't be able to withstand the burden.

That was why Khalid diluted it with water first.

Noel hurriedly meditated, focusing on his recovery. Of course, he didn't fully enter the meditation state since he had to be aware when Anna woke up.

Fortunately, she woke up only an hour later.

"Noel?! Is everything done?" Anna asked weakly while trying to get up.

It took Noel a moment to return to his original state and reply to her, "Yeah. Khalid has applied some medicine and if we close the wound as quickly as possible, it shouldn't leave a scar. He has told us to take medicine to boost the recovery rate."

"I see." Anna didn't seem to be surprised.

"Do you know anything about Khalid? I feel like I haven't heard the full information about him from you."

"Well, Khalid was the best alchemist in the previous life. Do you remember when you gave me a bunch of medicine?"

"Yeah."

"Those are the medicines he needed to advance his research. There are a lot of pills he created that would greatly impact the kingdom such as the Awakening Pill, the Physical Boost Drug, and even an unknown pill that can boost the absorption rate of the Demon Crystals. It's not completed yet."

"We have seen Awakening Pills already."

"As for the Physical Boost Drug, I heard that it can reduce the pain, pump up the muscle, and make you slightly hyperactive for a period of time. Well, you should be able to see them in the near future."

"I see. I guess getting Khalid is like a treasure." Noel nodded with a smile. With this, his goal became a lot closer.

And he envisioned a future where a lot of famous people emerged from the Ardagan Family.

"I'm looking forward to such a future." Noel muttered before remembering that he had to prepare the medicine. He hurriedly poured a glass of water and tossed the pill inside. "Here you go. Drink this once it dissolves completely. I'm going to meditate again."

"Alright." Anna nodded. Although she wanted to say something, it could be done later. After all, she was still focused on the previous battle because Khalid and Evan weren't here.

Anna couldn't help but recall their battle. In the last exchange, Anna could sense the hidden potential that Noel had never traced in the previous life.

Even though she investigated Noel again and again, she didn't know all the experiences that Noel had. He might meet the Sword Arbiter, but she didn't think Noel was close enough to receive some lectures from him.

In addition, with the difference in swordsmanship experience, Noel would also get a different kind of answer. For her, she noticed that the potential he unleashed earlier was bigger than the one in his previous life.

'He is going to fuse swordsmanship, two elements, and rune into his fighting style. I don't know how he is going to do it, but he would be unparalleled if he managed to do it. Well, I also have knowledge about my previous life and I have been advancing differently. Not only can I find an unknown ability, I can also reach a whole new level compared to my previous life.' Anna thought.

She started getting excited. The future had changed due to her actions, but that didn't matter anymore. Because this time, they were much faster and more powerful. 'There is also a rebellion... I don't think there will be one in this life.'

...

While waiting for the medicine to dissolve, Anna continued thinking about a few things related to the battle.

However, her feeling was the exact opposite of what her former teacher experienced right now.

After seeing the battle, she knew that Noel and Anna had to die sooner or later. And the Supreme Devil Organization would be the first to claim his life.

Hence, Josephine returned to a house where she was supposed to meet the Third Prince.

The Third Prince had been waiting for her the whole time, but his expression was a bit too dark as if he were angry about something.

Josephine only reported about what she had seen, wanting to know about the Third Prince's plan.

But when the Third Prince heard Anna and Noel's condition along with the Sword Arbiter's, he became more furious.

He asked coldly, "Josephine. Did you just let them go?"

"Huh? I've told you that the Sword Arbiter didn't leave any gaps to be exploited." Josephine frowned, not understanding why the Third Prince acted like this.

"Really? How about destroying the things they have just built?"

"If I did that, the first person who would be suspected was me. You should know that."

"Then, how about the water supply they gave to the citizens?"

When the third question came, Josephine realized what the Third Prince was talking about. There was no one in this kingdom who could infiltrate as smoothly as her with that space ability. And if there was someone who could help them without anyone knowing, it would be her.

Noel had even covered everything so that no one could see what was happening inside.

To transport all that water inside without water element spirit, there was only one possibility. It was Josephine who helped them.

Josephine was Anna's teacher. She had been acting under the order of the Royal Family this whole time, but Anna looked like that at first until she revealed that she was on Noel's side.

There was no guarantee that Josephine actually faked her loyalty. She might use her student to show that she was loyal and she wasn't.

Josephine clenched her fists. "Are you suspecting me right now?"

"Who knows? In any case, you are not clear either. How about using the Spirit Seal so that I can trust you a bit?" The Third Prince squinted his eyes.

Josephine's body froze. On the one hand, it could clear up her name. On the other hand, the Third Prince might use that opportunity to ask for other questions related to the Royal Family or any other shady dealings she had. So, the moment she agreed to this, she would be stripped bare.

There was no way she would allow the Third Prince to gain an advantage over her.

"If you can't trust me, then you don't have to." Josephine replied coldly and used her ability to disappear from this place.

The Third Prince's face turned solemn. "It seems that I have to investigate her first."

Chapter 926 One Good Thing After Another

"Lord Earl!"

"Lord Earl!"

The people lowered their heads respectfully when they saw Noel going around the city again. However, his appearance was a mess.

His body was covered by bandages. In fact, he had to use a wheelchair to move around. His face was pale and it seemed that he was sweating a lot.

Even with that kind of condition, Noel waved his hand to the people with a big smile on his face. "I'm fine, everyone. You don't have to worry about me."

Grandell was pushing the wheelchair with a worried face. Even though he was one of the people who knew about their real plan, he was still uncomfortable to see his lord becoming this weak.

Obviously, the person who received the anger of the masses was none other than Duke Lorelei. For the rest of his life, he will be remembered as the enemy of Lounstein.

But this was also a part of the agreement. Duke Lorelei actually sacrificed his life so that Lounstein could flourish. This way, when he finally passed away in the future, his son could clear up his name while forming a good relationship with the Ardagan Family.

For the time being, the duke remained inside the mayor's mansion to avoid the people.

Cough!

Cough!

Noel suddenly coughed up blood.

"My lord!" Grandell panicked and suggested, "We should go back immediately. You are in an extremely bad state."

"This is fine. I don't want people to think that the lord of Lounstein is so weak that he can't handle a single fight. Besides, this city is going to be better. If I can push myself a bit, the city will be rebuilt much faster." Noel shook his head helplessly.

When the citizens heard those words, they couldn't help but tear up. Their lord pushed himself so much that those who were complaining about their condition felt ashamed.

They had heard that the lord was in critical condition yesterday. And yet, just a single day later, the Lord risked his life again to assure the people. He even planned to work in that condition.

"My lord! Please go back and rest. We'll definitely rebuild this city!"

"That's right. I will work myself to the bone so that the earl doesn't need to worry!"

The citizens started to speak up but those who dared actually kneeled in front of Noel. This was their lord. If the Lord went that far for them, they were prepared to lay down their lives for his cause.

Some more citizens kneeled down, asking the same thing. Seeing a lot of people falling to their knees, the rest of the citizens ended up following suit.

"My lord. We should return right away. You can punish me however you want, but all I wish is for you to take some rest. Besides, the future lady is also in critical condition. You have to be by her side."

"But... this city is the place we work together to rebuild. I believe that—" Before Noel finished, Grandell raised his voice.

"My lord. Let us take care of the rest. Please don't worry that we will work hard. Just... Please rest. You have given us hope, so we don't wish to see you die and lose all that hope."

"Lord Earl!" Some citizens also called Noel as if asking the same thing.

"I..." Noel had a pained look and coughed up a few more times, making everyone worried. "I understand. I will take a rest for today."

"Thank you, my lord." Grandell hurriedly pushed the wheelchair back, not wanting to expose Noel further than this.

As they looked at their lord's back, the people had a similar thought. If they worked so hard that there was nothing to be done anymore, their lord wouldn't need to do anything and just get some rest to recover from his condition. It was hard to find a good lord like him, so they didn't wish him to die.

"I'm going to work hard. No, even if I have to push myself a bit more, I'm going to complete the storage."

"That's right. The building I'm working for is said to need another two days to complete, but I'm going to complete it tonight!"

"Let's go back. We can't procrastinate."

"Yes. This is our city. We can't let the Lord do everything."

"Ooh!"

The people hurriedly went back. This was probably the first time ever since coming here that they had a desire to rebuild the city by themselves without relying on other people.

These people ended up telling the people around them about Noel's determination which spiked their morale even further.

Without anyone realizing it, Noel's name had spread across the entire city. They also sent a prayer for Anna, hoping for her great recovery.

Unbeknownst to everyone, there was another reason why Noel showed himself in front of the citizens. Since the Sword Arbiter had eliminated all the spies, it meant that the enemies would send other spies to take over sooner or later.

By that time, Noel would have left the city. In other words, they couldn't observe Noel personally. The only way to get information about Noel was through the citizens. As a result, the citizens only gave them false information—the only information that Noel gave the citizens.

The people behind them wouldn't know that Noel had long recovered. So, when they attacked, they would be surprised to find Noel fighting in his peak condition.

In the mayor's mansion, Anna watched everything with a smile. As expected of Noel, he definitely could gain the citizens' hearts.

"We will probably stay here for another few days to fully recover and train with the Sword Arbiter. After that, we will leave the city. Although we want to check the other villages, especially their conditions, I don't think it's possible anymore. The villages might give different information that will make it suspicious.

"Besides, the Third Prince is going to appear sooner or later. Whether he likes it or not, he will have to buy more time. No, wait a minute. The only way for the Third Prince to stall Noel is to send him away from this city and overwork him."

Anna had realized that the reason Noel said that they would be visiting the villages around this city was due to the Third Prince. However, if the Third Prince blatantly ordered Noel to do such a reckless thing, Noel would definitely not like it.

"In that case, the Third Prince is going to use a few things as bait. I wonder what he is planning to do...." Anna fell silent for a moment. Now that she had started getting accustomed to possibilities, she started connecting the clues to speculate on the outcome.

"If I'm not wrong, this city has become a vital point for Noel in my previous life. However, what about the villages around it?" Anna tried to recall what Noel did with the area around this place.

Unfortunately, she was too focused on Noel's main city, so she barely had any information. If only she had been smarter and investigated everything, she would have known a lot more than this.

Still, there was one thing that she recalled. "Now that I think about it, the way Noel governed his territory was to ensure that everything was connected. The current activities of the demons have blocked access to those villages."

Anna was dumbfounded. It felt like she had understood what it was, but she couldn't put it into words.

"How should I say this? Noel is connecting the villages to the city, but because of the method from Jasmine, the villages have become prosperous. In exchange for that prosperity, the villagers have the ability to seek out more things outside their villages. And their parents who have been around the villages are thankful to Noel! That's right!"

Anna gasped. "When the villagers are thankful, those who are roaming around the village become the bearers of information. If they are going to attack the city, they will approach the village first. So, if the villagers notice something weird, they will report it to the city. This way, there is an outer barrier that will protect the city. What Noel is planning to do is to create that barrier and surround the entire territory with villages, spreading that barrier."

It took her a moment, but she finally realized why it was hard to penetrate Noel's defense. Noel was always ready for the incoming attack because he raised the living standard of each village, allowing the villages to become his eyes.

When she figured it out, she wrote down everything. The current Noel must haven't thought about this, so she would be the one to give this information. She believed Noel could improve this concept further with more time in their current lives.

However, both Noel and Anna had one miscalculation. No, it was more like they never expected it because it never happened in their previous lives.

When Anna was about to meet Noel to tell him about her findings, Captain Hansen actually visited the mayor's mansion.

"My lord!" Hansen kneeled on one knee. Anna ended up hiding on the corner, wondering what Hansen was planning to say. She thought the Third Prince had appeared and wanted to meet Noel.

Noel remained calm because Hansen's affection was still extremely loyal. He asked, "What's wrong?"

"You have a visitor. I'm not sure whether to allow them to enter or not, but the soldiers are having a hard time because of their identity."

"Their identity? Who are they and what's their number?"

"There should be around sixty to seventy people. They seem to have brought a lot of carriages and we're still inspecting them now. However, their carriage carries the flag of the crescent moon."

"Crescent moon? Is there a noble family with that crest?" Noel pondered.

"They are not nobles. The one who is leading them is a young lady with a nun outfit. She claims to have met you and introduces herself as Saintess Layla."

Noel widened his eyes in shock. The moment he heard the name, he instantly remembered that person's identity.

Even Anna couldn't believe it. In the past, the Saintess was affected by the demon and fell into depravity. In their current lives, Noel and Anna have actually gone their way to save the Saintess of the Moon Temple.

That was right. In the past, Saintess Layla actually said, "You might lose the recognition of the people as well as their thanks, but you have gained the respect of our Moon Temple, especially me. If you need our help in the future, as long as your goal doesn't clash with the Moon Temple's purpose, we'll help you."

He even got a letter from her. It was the letter of introduction from the Saintess herself. And that letter could give Noel the best treatment from the Moon Temple. It even had the power to receive help from the Holy Knights of the Moon Temple.

Noel had never utilized this help because he had to go into hiding. Now that everything was clear and Noel could finally reveal himself again, the Saintess might think that this was a good opportunity to help him.

That was right. The reason for her coming here couldn't be more obvious.

When Noel found out their identities, he couldn't help but chuckle. "Hahahaha. To think that I would forget about this..."

"Is there something wrong?" Hansen asked while tilting his head in confusion.

"I have indeed helped them in the past. They are probably coming here to help us. I can guarantee their identity, so please bring them in, Captain Hansen." Noel gave him permission.

...

Outside the city, Layla was waiting patiently as though she had expected to see Noel forget about her.

She couldn't help but say, "I have told you that I will repay this debt, so I'm here. That's right. I have told them that if he and Miss Anna are going to get married, he should have called me since I will be the one giving them blessings."

Chapter 927 Negotiation

Noel and Anna were sitting on their beds as though they were still too hurt to move around. Meanwhile, a beautiful woman wearing a white robe with a crescent moon crest on her chest and her signature blindfold stood in front of them.

Despite seeing them injured, she actually greeted her with a calm tone as though she wasn't worried about them. "Since I've promised back then that I will drop the honorific after you become a noble, then I can be more comfortable with you. Hello, Noel and Anna."

Noel nodded. "Unfortunately, I can't greet you formally because of my current condition."

There were only Noel, Anna, Evan, Khalid, and Layla in the room. Evan was just trying to protect these two kids while trying to learn about the relationship between Noel and Anna.

Evan thought, 'The Moon Temple is a large influence. They remain neutral most of the time, so it's surprising that these two actually know her. When did they meet? It seems that I still underestimate these two kids. Their connection might be far bigger than my wildest imagination.'

Seeing that Noel didn't say anything about the others inside this room, Layla actually said, "Is that so? Even though you are well enough to run and jump around?"

"..." Noel scratched the back of his head. It seemed that Layla had realized his current condition.

"I have told you in the past, right? I don't regret losing my eyesight because in exchange, all my other senses are heightened. Your breath doesn't sound like you are in critical condition... Though, I can't see if you're covered in bandages or not." Layla confidently smiled as though she had seen through Noel.

"Haha. I guess I can't fool you." Noel chuckled. He was impressed by Layla's sense. In the past, Layla was only a peak Spirit Master. But because she had exhausted most of his power to protect the city, she couldn't release her full power during that fight.

And this time, it seemed that she had become even stronger. While Noel was confident that he could defeat Layla, it wouldn't be an easy fight due to the nature of her ability.

Layla said, "It seems that you don't need our healers, so I guess I have come in vain."

"While it's good to reminisce about the past, I think we should move on to the matter in question first."

"If you say so." Layla nodded in agreement. "The reason for coming here is to repay you for your help back then. As I said earlier, you've gained my respect for what you did back then, so in exchange, I will be setting up the Moon Temple here. If possible, in your main city as well."

"!!!" Evan was the most shocked person here. He thought, 'If the Moon Temple set up their branch here, it would mean that at least fifty temple knights would be stationed here. There should be a few Spirit Masters and Spirit Wielders. While they can't be used to fight against other influences, they will definitely help if the city is attacked by demons.'

'I am here to help the city, but if the Moon Temple takes over, it will mean that there is a chance that Noel will replace me. Still, why would the Saintess go all the way here just to set up the branch? Normally, it would be just an officer coming here.'

'And there should be one or two priests with healing abilities standing by in the village. It seems that aside from repaying Noel, the Saintess is trying to witness the transformation of runes.'

Evan knew all the benefits that came from the Moon Temple setting up their branch here. While the temple was also aiming for something, the benefits far outweigh it.

Noel smiled with a wry smile. "I don't mind if you want to set up a temple here, but I can't give you permission for the main city yet."

"I see." Layla understood Noel's circumstances. It seemed that the main city was more amazing than she originally thought. And Noel obviously wanted to hide his trump card as much as possible.

"Before that, I would like to know the reason for you to suddenly come here. This is not a mere repayment, right?"

Layla hesitated for a moment. "Of course. I'm not going to use my temple influence to force you. Instead, I'm giving a proposal that will benefit the temple and the Ardagan Family."

"Oh? Please elaborate."

"I am trying to believe in the future potential of the Ardagan Family. If you give us permission, we would like to construct a third headquarter of our Moon Temple in your territory!"

"Headquarter?!" Evan dropped his jaw to the ground. The Moon Temple might be disliked because it was known as the temple of sadness. It was because they built their temple in a place where there were a lot of battles and people lost their hope.

However, the Moon Temple was actually a god-sent opportunity for a lord. After all, they could receive help to fight the demons. Even more so when they constructed a headquarters.

Evan recounted the information about the Moon Temple's second headquarters. 'In the past, Earl Escanor had headquarters in his territory. As a result, he can focus on expanding his territory because the Moon Temple Headquarters are supplying knights to protect the territory from a demon. In other words, he can mobilize all his force for the expansion.

'In addition, the headquarters have a lot of healers. In other words, if the soldiers are injured, he can simply ask them to be healed by the temple. Due to his contribution, the Earl has become a Duke now.

'So, the Moon Temple is proposing that, in exchange for taking a look at the runes, they will be helping Noel expand his territory. And this was actually a perfect opportunity because Noel's territory was at the edge of the kingdom, meaning he could expand his territory outward.'

Noel looked down for a moment, contemplating. If this was someone else, they might agree to it without hesitation. However, Noel wondered if the runes were more important than the temple or not.

He even glanced at Anna, who was considering the same thing.

"I'm grateful that you think highly of me, but I don't think I can grant you that permission." Noel shook his head helplessly.

That rejection amused Layla and dumbfounded Evan.

"May I know the reason?" Layla asked, not expecting such an answer.

Noel actually glanced at the side, specifically at Khalid as if telling him to speak up.

Khalid smiled confidently. "That's because he has me. Your Moon Temple is extraordinary, but I can do the job of several priests if I want it."

"Mhm?" Layla tried to recall the voice of this person, but no one came into her mind, so she asked, "May I know who you are?"

"Khalid."

"Khalid..." Layla tried to recall this name. Since Khalid was so confident, he shouldn't be an unknown person, so it narrowed down the potential people. It was then that reality struck her. "May I know if you are the former Royal Alchemist Khalid Mahmud?"

"It is I."

Layla finally understood why Noel had the liberty to reject her. Khalid could handle the task of the priests and Noel could use runes to kill the demons.

From what she heard from the observation of her subordinate, it seemed that the Runes were more important than the Moon Temple.

On the one hand, Noel's potential couldn't be missed. On the other hand, it would be hard to convince Noel. The more desperate she was, the easier it was for Noel to reject her.

Still, it didn't mean that Layla was planning to give up.

"If that's the case, what if I offer myself?"

"Huh?!" Anna was the first one to react with an annoyed expression. It was an instant rejection for her.

"Oh my, I apologize. I should have worded it better." Layla hurriedly corrected herself. "What if I remain in your city and take care of it personally?"

Noel was astonished. Layla's worth was much different from other offers. Her ability was simple and powerful. It allowed her to put up a barrier to surround the city, repelling all kinds of demons. Having her inside the city could allow him to create a barrier on a few walls while concentrating his army on one wall.

And it became even more important when Noel thought about his main city. The only wall that would be erected in the first attack was the north wall, so having her cover the rest would prove extremely beneficial.

In fact, for Noel's territory, Layla was worth more than the entire headquarters.

It was simply not an offer he could reject.

Anna furrowed her eyebrows, feeling something was not right. "I don't think that's all. You're going to offer another condition, right? Someone like you should have known about your true worth."

Layla smiled. "Of course. The first condition is that I will remain in your city for only three years. In fact, by that time, your territory won't need me anymore."

"And the other conditions?"

"Of course, it's to build the temple headquarters. And I would like to build it as soon as possible since I'm curious about the future."

Noel scratched the back of his head. "You're making this hard for me."

"If you hadn't helped me back then, I might have been controlled by a demon. So, I don't think it's hard for you."

Evan was glaring at Noel as if telling him to accept the offer. Khalid didn't think much of the headquarters, but he indeed felt threatened by Layla.

Anna was too focused on the fact that the temple came since it was much different from her previous life.

Noel sighed. "Alright. I can give you permission. However, I can only give you the quota for the second migration."

"Second migration?" Layla tilted her head in confusion.

"Yeah. We're currently bringing in the first batch of migrants. The second batch will come in a few months... basically the same time Duke Lorelei visited our main city."

"This..." Layla thought that her offer was enough to allow her to go to the main city right away.

But it seemed that Noel was more formidable than she thought. At the same time, she could understand that it would cause a problem if she entered first before Duke Lorelei, considering he was the first to be here.

However, Noel actually added another offer. "Though, I don't mind if you are going to visit my city alone."

On the one hand, this offer was unfair to Duke Lorelei. On the other hand, Noel had specified that she had to go alone.

Layla was blind, so she wouldn't be able to learn much even if she came, considering the rune required her eyesight to learn. In other words, she could only learn from what she heard. Of course, she could gather the information from normal citizens, but it was still very limited information.

Regardless, this was an opportunity. If she agreed, Noel would definitely ask her to help defend his city. While the information she could gather was limited, she could actually tell the people in the second batch migration about the runes. In fact, she might even be able to send a letter.

In a way or another, it wasn't really upsetting for Evan.

Layla put her hand on her cheek as though she were contemplating it carefully.

After about three minutes, Layla replied, "I will agree to that condition. It seems that we will be meeting a lot in the future."

Noel gave a wry smile to Duke Lorelei. "I'm sorry, Duke. In exchange, I will increase the number you can purchase later."

Duke Lorelei was a bit disappointed, but he still agreed. This was better than nothing.

Now that the negotiation was over, Layla became a bit more playful by teasing Anna. "Please don't mind me, Anna. A Saintess needs to be pure until their death. So, no need to be jealous."

"I'm not jealous!" Anna clicked her tongue while looking away.

Chapter 928 Moon Temple

"So, this is the carriage without a horse," said Layla with a big smile on her face. Despite not being able to see, she could hear that there was no galloping sound that usually comes from a horse.

There was a continuous flow of energy that supplied the rune. She was so excited that she couldn't help but stand on top of the carriage.

"Saintess. Please be mindful of your image." One of the knights who was protecting her couldn't help but warn her, albeit Layla didn't seem to care about it.

"I mean, look at this... This is an automatic carriage without a horse. Just imagine how many horses we need to bring whenever we're on an expedition. What if those horses die on the way? If only we had this kind of technology, precious horses wouldn't lose their lives and the people would have an easier time." Layla looked extremely excited about this carriage.

Because they had been moving around to help people, they knew how much horses were worth. So, this technology was what captivated her the most.

She couldn't help but remember the conversation with Noel before.

"So, when are we going to leave?" Layla asked.

"I still have a few things to do. At the very least, one more week."

"One week, huh?" Layla didn't think much about the time. Noel had the right to be careful and within that one week, they could also see around the city while doing their job.

When she recalled that information and linked it with this kind of technology, the Saintess couldn't help but say, "Inform Paladin Lloyd and Paladin Aurelia to be ready to come in the second batch of migration for the heart of Lounstein."

"What? You're going to mobilize the paladins?" The knight was stunned.

"We will have to be sincere if we want to receive his help. With me and two paladins helping the city, he shouldn't mind parting with a lot of stuff, right?"

"But Saintess... Paladins are the strongest force in our temple. They are the only Spirit Grandmasters we have, aside from Archbishop Noah. And you are going to ask two Paladins and yourself to help this territory?"

"Paladin Aureila will come to the main city and help me. Paladin Lloyd will be standing by in this city. If those elders ask about it, just tell them that I'm placing my bet for the future. They will probably shut their mouths once they hear about this city."

"..." The knight gasped. He thought Layla was insane. Still, when he thought about this automatic carriage, he knew how much easier it would be for them to reach their destination. And this was only the prototype.

When Noel improves it even further, it might turn into extremely ridiculous stuff. In other words, the Saintess exchanged the service of the Paladins for that future.

"But won't the Earl feel troubled if we do this?"

"We're going to build new headquarters in the main city. So, it's normal to at least have one Paladin stationed there, no? Let's just say that Lloyd is a bonus."

"..." The knight gave a wry smile. The Saintess was probably the only one who could say it.

After all, she was also one of the Spirit Grandmasters that the temple had.

"I understand. I'll report it to the elders about your request." The knight nodded.

"Thank you."

While Layla was exploring the city, Noel and Anna were discussing her. They had never thought that Layla would come here, so Noel couldn't help but ask, "What actually happened to her in our previous lives?"

"Hmm..." Anna recounted what happened. "She was controlled by the demons and became a Spirit Grandmaster. I was the one who defeated her and the Moon Temple ended up picking a new saintess.

"However, Layla was irreplaceable. It wasn't that she was strong. In one versus one, she would definitely lose because she didn't have the ability to hurt others. Instead, she received the ability to protect.

"And that barrier could be expanded to a whole city, creating an indestructible wall that protected the people. If she wanted, she could trap thousands of demons for a few days by herself.

"Such an ability couldn't be replaced by anyone. It should be a worthy power for someone who received the blessing of the Moon Goddess."

Noel acknowledged her power. It was indeed such a ridiculous power, but he still thought that his fire was more potent. Still, it didn't matter because the Saintess was on their side.

While the Moon Temple was sitting out when there was a conflict between humans, she would definitely step up against the demons. He could even leave the demons at the Moon Temple while he took care of the human side.

"I see. How about the Moon Temple? Do you know any information about them? I haven't searched for their information about them yet."

"Moon Temple is a huge influence. They have several Grandmasters and a lot of knights. They nurture a lot of healers, which spread all around the kingdoms."

"Kingdoms?" Noel frowned, not expecting it to be plural."

"Yes. Right now, they are operating in Greenwood Kingdom and Muivell Kingdom. In the past, they were going to expand to the Zaecuria Kingdom, but the hole the previous Saintess left behind was so big that they failed to do so."

"So, the fact that they have two headquarters."

"Yeah. The first headquarters is located west of the kingdom. Meanwhile, the second headquarters was built fifty years ago in the Greenwood Kingdom. They remain neutral most of the time even though they are sought after by countries."

"I see. It seems that the Saintess loves gambling."

Anna nodded in agreement. "If she constructed the third headquarters in our territory, it meant that she would abandon the expansion to the Zaecuria Kingdom because she chose us. And if I'm not wrong, at least one Paladin will remain in the headquarters at all times. There will also be dozens of healers. So, I'm assuming that she will split the forces into two, since she has promised to build a branch here."

"A paladin, huh..." Noel thought for a moment. "This is also a bit concerning."

"What do you mean?"

"You see... If the forces within the city are too strong for the lord to control, it means that if they are trying to break away, the lord will be powerless to stop them. This is like the current condition of the royal family. If we are too strong for the royal family to control, they are going to eliminate us."

"So, that's how it is. But don't you think it's fine for the time being?" Anna asked.

"Yes. We have four Spirit Grandmasters right now. But if she is going to move a Paladin here, it means that there will be two Spirit Grandmasters from their side. Even Duke Lorelei is here. The power balance becomes a bit too chaotic."

"Do we need more Grandmasters?"

"How many Grandmasters did I have in the past?"

"Hmm..." Anna recounted the number. "There are seven Grandmasters. Well, my family only had four Grandmasters in our previous lives: my father, his student, my elder brother, and me. As for you, you have Dimitri, Howard, the Sword Saint's successor, and..."

Anna paused, not knowing whether she should reveal their names.

Noel asked, "It's fine. Please tell me about it."

"Then, the other three are Howard's second in command, a mercenary that you saved, and an abandoned Spirit ian. Do you need me to say their names?"

"No. That's enough." Noel thought for a moment. Howard's second in command should be among the four Spirit Masters. He had no idea about the mercenary, so he should have appeared after he became a lord or they might not even meet in this life due to the change of situation. As for the Spirit ian, it should come from the Tower Association. That person might even be the one leading the research for runes.

Still, he couldn't meet the Sword Saint's successor due to the promise to Old Ru. In exchange, he had Anna. However, it would still take a bit of time to nurture Spirit Masters to become Spirit Grandmaster.

If he just wanted to increase their Spiritual Energy to the Grandmaster level, he could simply shove the Demon Crystals into their mouths, but their skill would be lacking.

Noel asked, "How about the kids?"

"The kids? If you're asking about the Sword Dancing Kids, the twins were Spirit Wielder, almost Spirit Masters. The others are still one rank lower, but they are quite strong. If you're talking about Tristan and Sandra, Sandra is an official maid. I didn't meet her, so I didn't know her strength. Tristan was a genius in Rune, so he had become a big figure."

"Livia?"

"Livia, huh? I didn't investigate her that much, but she was the one taking care of the whole academy. And it didn't seem like she left your side."

"I see." Noel fell into deep thought. On the one hand, he couldn't rely on this information. In fact, he would have a hard time finding them and convincing them. And that relationship would be superficial because of the information from Anna. On the other hand, he needed more Grandmasters in his territory.

"I will think about it for the time being. Instead, you should be prepared for the next mission."

"Next mission?"

"Yeah. The messenger is about to arrive. I'm sure that after seeing the Moon Temple and Duke Lorelei, the Third Prince won't be able to hold the urge to send me away."

"He wants you to move in a critical condition to worsen your condition? But doesn't that mean you're going to be angry when he makes it oblivious?"

"Yeah. That's why there must be something that he can use to tempt me. It should be pretty precious, so we should get ready and act like we're dying. I've told Khalid not to show himself as well."

"I see. In that case, I will take my leave." Anna nodded, planning to return to her room. She was still curious about what Noel was planning to do, but considering his charm, he should be able to get a few Spirit Grandmasters.

While she doubted that the Moon Temple had bad thoughts, it made sense if he wanted to increase his strength for the sake of maintaining the current power balance.

By the time they reached the peak of Spirit Grandmaster if not Spirit Transcendence, the entire power balance would be tipped over.

She couldn't help but wonder what would have happened if she and Noel hadn't died in their previous lives and somehow reached the Spirit Transcendence Stage?

Aside from the commander of the Demon Banner Army and the Marshall, there was no one who had reached this stage. So, having two additional Spirit Transcendence might not be good for the kingdom since they were fighting each other.

And in this life, the appearance of two Transcendences would definitely be enough to create a new kingdom. That was why the royal family was eager to eliminate them.

When she was walking back to her room, the Saintess surprisingly appeared on the opposite side as if she had been waiting for her.

Anna didn't know what she wanted, so she was just going to pass her and return to their room.

At that time, the Saintess opened her mouth. "The Moon Goddess gives me a revelation. The end of your growth is near if you keep doing the same thing. Have you explored the actual power behind your destiny?"

"!!!" Anna's body froze as she couldn't help but turn to the Saintess. "What did you say?"

The Saintess shook her head. "I don't know. The Moon Goddess only told me to pass that message to you. I don't even understand the meaning behind it. To me, you are a peerless genius with unlimited potential, so it's kind of surprising. Anyway, I have passed the message."

Anna's body trembled as she watched the Saintess walking away. Those words struck deep in her heart.

Chapter 929 The Truth

"The Moon Goddess gives me a revelation. The end of your growth is near if you keep doing the same thing. Have you explored the actual power behind your destiny?"

Those words kept ringing in Anna's mind as she couldn't help but take another look at her current condition.

"The end of my growth... Is it because I was stuck in the peak Spirit Grandmaster before I died and after reaching that point, I wouldn't know what I should do after that? But I have a few things in my mind. It's true that I haven't experienced the strength of Spirit Transcendence, but it's not at the level I'm clueless about it."

Anna thought that the revelation wasn't that accurate. However, there should be a reason why the Moon Goddess said it that way. After all, she was a Goddess.

When she thought about it, she changed her perspective. "She directly mentioned 'growth' instead of any other words. The reason for my growth..."

When she thought about it, there was only one person that came to her mind. In fact, this might be what the Moon Goddess really wanted to say. That person was Noel.

That was right. In the future, Noel would have unlimited growth. He had two spirits and the size of his reserve would be more than twice of her, considering her assimilation rate wasn't perfect.

Even if she managed to maintain this rate of progress, she was bound to lose sooner or later.

Anna had been too focused on the competition to decide the acting head of the Ardagan Family that would end soon. But with their personality, the competition definitely wouldn't end at that point.

Even if she won, Noel would grow even more and at that time, she wouldn't be able to follow Noel's growth anymore.

When that thought appeared, she felt a part of her heart become empty.

"My growth is going to end soon, huh?" On the one hand, she felt hopeless. On the other hand, she thought there must be another way.

That was when the second part of the message entered the picture.

"Have you explored the actual power behind your destiny?"

Anna looked down for a moment. "Actual power... the power that allows me to regress is Old Ru's power, right? Now that I think about it, what happened to the shell? In my previous life, I didn't see Noel using that shell on me. What was actually the power behind that shell?"

It felt like the matter between her regression was more complicated than she originally thought.

When she thought about it, she recalled a certain scene.

Back then, Old Ru had known about her regression. At that time, she asked if Old Ru was the reason behind her rebirth or not. But Old Ru actually answered her "Yes and no."

However, she only heard about the 'Yes' part as Old Ru mentioned everything about his shell and his power.

She was overwhelmed by the information in the past that she didn't ask why Old Ru wasn't part of her regression.

"The 'NO' part should be related to my latter growth. Right now, it's impossible for me to visit the Old Ru again and ask him about it. He said that the shell was used to protect his grandson and Noel wasn't the type to break the promise.

"The only threat I could think of was the Demon King. No, there was also the rebellion. If Noel and Duke Lorelei met in the past, the duke should have asked Noel to direct his hatred elsewhere. And there was no way Noel would start the rebellion.

"I feel like these three are connected. Wait a minute. These three were just things that happened in the previous life, not the power behind my reincarnation. Time, huh... Is it only time?"

The more Anna thought about it, the more complex it became. There might be a lot of things that ended up causing Noel to choose her.

As long as she couldn't figure out that answer, she might not be able to keep up with Noel.

"If I think about it, there was only one person who knew about my reincarnation at first. It was me. But Old Ru knew about it because his shell disappeared and I was the one approaching Noel. There should be one more person that actually knows about my rebirth... The one who has witnessed everything... from within."

Anna gasped upon the shocking truth. She rushed to her room to enter her consciousness.

She returned to the cliff where the Thunder Berserker Spirit always met her.

"Thunder Berserker Spirit..." Anna sucked a cold breath. If there was anyone else who could know about her reincarnation, it would be the Thunder Berserker Spirit, who had been watching her this whole time.

"Welcome." The Thunder Berserker Spirit remained calm as though he had expected all this. No, it was more accurate that she had been waiting for it.

"The Moon Goddess gave a revelation. When Noel told me that the Moon Goddess was actually a spirit, I couldn't help but wonder how she actually knew. At first, it looked like it was simply because she was a

Goddess, but that wasn't all. It was only a suspicion, but if a spirit like the Moon Goddess could know about my regression, then you, who have resided within me, should know about it as well."

The Thunder Berserker Spirit replied, "I can give you a passing grade for it. It seems that you have a lot of questions. Unfortunately, I don't think I can give you all the answers you want. But I will be kind enough to answer three of your questions. So, choose your questions carefully."

"..." Anna fell silent. There were indeed a lot of things that the spirit could clear up, but because of the restrictions, she had to reconsider all her questions.

"First question, do you know everything from the start?"

"Are you sure you want to ask this question?"

"Yes." Anna nodded without hesitation. The first question was meant to confirm everything. The second question was to test the limit and the last question would be the main question.

The spirit acknowledged it without hesitation. "That's right. I know everything."

Anna's heart skipped a beat. It seemed that she had found the right path to her mystery. Then, she asked the second question. "In that case, can you tell me how the Moon Goddess knows about my regression? I don't think it's as simple as the spirits being connected to each other. If you are that connected, does that mean that you are residing inside the bad guys and continue doing bad things.

"It doesn't really match on how the spirits become the savior of the human race and the weapon to fight against the demons. So, I'm afraid that there is a more complex situation among the spirits."

The spirit didn't immediately reply to this question. "All spirits might not be connected to each other. Even if they are connected, they are bound for their purposes. The only thing all spirits have in common is their loyalty to the Spirit God.

"However, what do you think about the origin of the spirits? Do you think they just appear out of nowhere? Or are they born like humans?"

"!!!" Anna didn't miss that last question. "Don't tell me..."

"You could say it that way. The Moon Goddess and the time spirit you are thinking right now is connected. That's your answer."

Anna fell into deep thought. He never thought about it. The spirits had a lot of form, but they eventually reached the humanoid form. There were also beasts like spirits and even one that didn't have a physical body.

She never wondered about the origin of the spirits. Were they born from nothing? This answer explained a lot of things. In fact, there might be another connection that she didn't know among the spirits. And she was also curious about the purposes of each spirit since the only thing the spirit had in common was their loyalty to the Spirit God.

If Old Ru could deduce about her regression just by meeting her, the spirit that gave him that power should have known the consequences of its action.

That explanation gave Anna's decision on the last question.

"Then, my last question... How does the power of time work?"

The Thunder Berserker Spirit raised his eyebrows but soon smiled. "The time can't be revealed. It's not because I don't want to say it, I can't. However, I can give you a little analogy."

The spirit raised his hand and created multiple lightning that remained static on top of his palm.

"You can consider these ten lightning trails to be your destined future. Let's say, you are in the middle." The spirit then connected the trails in one way or another. "These are the possibilities and the branches connecting it can push you to a different kind of possibility."

"I'm still confused." Anna tilted her head. The explanation was much harder to digest.

"Let's use another example then. Bring that box to me." The Thunder Berserker pointed at the box behind Anna.

Anna didn't know what he wanted, but she still walked to the box. But when she was about to grab the box, the Thunder Berserker Spirit said, "If you touch that box, your consciousness will return."

"!!!" Anna abruptly stopped, hesitating. When she turned back to the spirit, she noticed that the spirit pointed at the different branch from earlier.

"If you don't bring me that box, you won't get your answer."

Anna's body trembled again. She glanced at the box, wondering if she should take the risk or not. When she was about to make her decision, the spirit pointed at another trail.

"Do you still not get it?" The spirit asked.

"I'm sorry." Anna shook her head helplessly.

The spirit returned to the original trail. "This is your timeline and current destiny. There is supposed to be no box or whatsoever. And because I created that box and asked you to pick it up, you ended up in the destiny where you picked up that box.

"However, your destiny shifted again when you hesitated because of my warning before returning to the previous destiny because I threatened you. These branches that connected one possibility to another is what I've been doing. In other words, your preparation, your action, or even the environment around you can actually shift your destiny. It includes the time artifact."

"!!!" Anna gasped. "Wait a minute. Does that mean that shell is only something that changes my destiny?"

"And there is one more thing you need to know. Time only moves forward."

"Moves forward..." The shock Anna received took her aback. "If time only moves forward, does that mean that I have never regressed? No. Should I say that I'm moving to a different timeline where that timeline is actually me a few years ago? It was perfectly the same as what I experienced, but because of me shifting into that timeline, it started changing."

"Something along those lines." The spirit acknowledged it.

"Then, what about the original timeline? If we're using that theory, doesn't that mean I'm occupying my own body? No. What exactly have I done to my original body? Now that I think about it, because I have the memory and the same reputation, I have never doubted it.

"The only thing I remember is my own memory. If one thing can shift the timeline, does that mean the original Anna Stargaze in this timeline is someone different? While she might be similar to me, she is not entirely the same. In other words, I have never known about the real memory of the real Anna Stargaze..."

Anna gasped in shock. That was right. She had never thought about it. The memory she had actually came from Anna's experience instead of the original owner of this timeline. In other words, she had occupied that person's body.

"What happened to the real owner of this body then?" Anna asked.

"The three questions are up. So, I can't answer that question." The spirit sighed. When she opened his eyes, his focus didn't stay in Anna's disappointed face. Instead, it was the figure behind Anna. "I don't think I have to answer that question though."

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"I don't think I have to answer that question though."

Anna suddenly felt a presence appearing behind her and hurriedly turned around. Her instinct was telling her to raise her left elbow, resulting in the collision with two hands.

"!!!" Anna never thought that she would find another person here. But when she raised her head, she saw her own face. She caught Anna's elbow.

Both of them suddenly released their lightning. The spark formed a shock wave that pushed them back.

Anna couldn't help but take another look at the person who had the same face as her. At the same time, she also noticed the numbness in her arm. The other party's lightning was surprisingly far more powerful. It was like a whirlpool that engulfed everything.

Anna asked, "Who are you?"

"You shouldn't have asked that question when you already know the answer." The other party spoke with the same voice as her. However, her tone was extremely cold.

"!!!" Anna's expression darkened.

"In the rebirth situation, what do you think is the easiest to transport?" The Thunder Berserker Spirit raised another question.

The answer was obvious. In fact, that was the only answer, considering her body should have died with Noel. It was even more convincing after meeting the Sword Saint.

He once used the Soul Contract with her, proving that soul indeed existed. After she died, the soul must have been transported to this timeline and took over the real Anna because her soul was simply stronger than her.

Yes. In this situation, there was only one body but two souls. Her real soul occupied the body this entire time, but what about the original Anna's soul? The answer was obvious. It had been residing in my consciousness. Anna was simply not aware of it or the Thunder Berserker Spirit might play a part in hiding her.

"..." Both Annas stared at each other. The original Anna suddenly leaped forward while shouting, "Just give me my body back!"

Anna didn't plan to lose until she fully understood the entire situation. So, she grabbed the original Anna's hand.

Both of them were releasing their lightning in the same area, causing their lightning to clash with each other. But surprisingly, Anna was the one losing in terms of lightning. Her hand was the first to go numb as she ended up leaping back to regain some distance.

"Wait. I have a lot of questions. Let's talk about this!" Anna tried to stop her, but the latter didn't care and simply charged at her.

"There is no need to talk. Weren't you like that in the past too? You killed anyone who disagreed with you even if they were innocent people!" The original Anna shouted.

Anna grabbed the original Anna's hands, trying to stop her. Their lightning once again sparked, but the result remained the same. Anna was the one losing.

"It's useless. No matter how many times you use it, your lightning won't be stronger than mine. You can't even use the lightning from the Thunder Berserker Spirit perfectly, you're not worthy of that body!"

Anna gritted her teeth, enduring the pain in her hands. The original Anna's lightning was more violent than hers. It was truly the lightning coming from a berserker. Unlike the current Anna who had refined her control, the original Anna focused on the explosive power of that lightning.

"I'm not going to give you back this body."

"You freaking intruder. How dare you occupy my body?! You even ended up falling for him!"

"I know that I occupy your body, but he is not our enemy anymore!"

"You may be right. But that's because of you! My current enemy is you!" The original Anna glared. Her eyes were filled with a lot of anger. "I will defeat you here and take over your body. After that, you

won't be able to leave this place and see how I will steal your man! The only thing you can do is witness everything from this place."

"You!" Anna gritted her teeth. She never thought she would be this angry to 'herself.' The lightning around her body began to become even more violent as she let out a roar. "Aaaahhhh!"

The original Anna also released her lightning at full intensity. But, surprisingly, they were equal this time.

"I have been waiting for this chance. I have trained myself to reach a level where I can defeat you." The original Anna was distorted as if her anger had begun to take over. Her physical ability and her lightning became even stronger.

Anna started losing and even took a step back. If this continued, the original Anna would definitely overpower her.

As the original Anna said, it appeared that she had been training in this place for a long time without her knowing. Everything was for the sake of defeating her soul here so that she could take over the body.

However, the thought of her helplessly watching how her real body acts like nothing happened and Noel falling for the 'same' Anna caused her to feel so much pain in her chest.

"I am not going to let you!" Anna gritted her teeth. She withstood the pain and neutralized the lightning.

At the same time, Anna couldn't help but think about what the original Anna had been watching this whole time. How did she feel when her body was taken over by her? She must be feeling the same thing as her.

On the one hand, Anna wanted to be selfish and chose to remain the one controlling the body. On the other hand, Anna could somehow understand this hatred.

If it was the previous her, she might not be able to calm herself so quickly. And Noel's training seemed to bear some fruit, considering she could imagine all the possibilities that the original Anna experienced.

Anna said, "You should know that it's because I took over your body that everything started going better, right?"

"So, should I thank you for kicking me out of my own body?"

"No. What I'm trying to say is that it's better if we talk about it. In the past, I've been incapable of acknowledging my faults. You should know that now it's different."

"If you acknowledge your fault, then switch with me. You have done enough!"

"No way. I'm not going to let you get Noel! I, too, have a dream that I want to fulfill."

"Because of your damn actions, I can no longer see him as an enemy. However, it doesn't mean that I can't bully him."

"Do you think you can do it? He is not that kind of person."

"That's why you should give me that body. I will show you that I'm capable of doing so. You just have to push him down and get the deeds done until he can't do it anymore! Even though your soul is older, your actions are too pure. You old hag!"

"What did you say?!"

Both Annas started applying their strength to show their anger. None of them was planning to give up.

The Thunder Berserker Spirit, on the other hand, remained silent. In fact, it looked like he was amused when watching these two girls fight.

They might be different, but they are derived from the same person. So, it was like they were fighting each other for someone.

There was another reason why he actually trained the original Anna's soul in this place. And Anna seemed to have realized it, albeit the original Anna prevented her from thinking about it.

"You..." The original Anna started to get annoyed.

"What are you? You are me." Anna frowned. "My offer still stands. Let's talk about this. It will be nice if we can reach an agreement."

"Don't talk like you are above me!" The original Anna shouted.

"Because I am!" Anna shouted back as she tried to kick the original Anna. The latter avoided it, but they ended up releasing each other.

Both Annas lowered their hands as they formed a sword.

Cling!

Even though the original Anna was different, she had watched and felt how Anna used her weapon, so she started using everything she had experienced.

A series of clicking sounds reverberated. In just five seconds, they had exchanged ten blows with no one gaining an advantage over the other.

Anna couldn't help but remember the first time she met Noel. The anger might not be as intense, but their action was a bit similar. In the past, she overwhelmed Noel, but this time, she couldn't suppress the original Anna.

That was why she tried another approach.

She asked out loud, "Thunder Berserker Spirit. Why did you train her?"

"Is there a problem? Both of you are my contractors, so I don't think it's a problem, right?" The spirit nonchalantly replied as though it wasn't a big deal.

"Mhm?!" Anna widened her eyes in shock as if that answer had given her a realization. When she thought about it, both of them had the Thunder Berserker Spirit, one body, but two souls.

Normally, people only had one spirit, one soul, and one body. Noel might have two spirits, but Anna realized that she had now become something similar to Noel, but the difference was two souls.

In the first place, two spirits would allow Noel to have two Spiritual Energy Reserve. In that case, what would two souls give?

That realization actually gave her a shock and caused her to be distracted for a split second.

"An opening!" The original Anna hurriedly kicked Anna's hands, knocking them up. After that, she tried to slash her apart, but Anna skillfully rotated her blade, stopping it at the last second.

The original Anna didn't give up and she hurriedly caught her before pushing her down. Her hand tried to reach for Anna's face before electrocuting her, but Anna blocked that hand with her other elbow.

Even though Anna was pinned to the ground, it didn't seem that the original Anna gained that much advantage.

In fact, this allowed Anna to ask out loud, "Thunder Berserker Spirit. If having two spirits allows you to have two times the Spiritual Energy Reserve, what happens if you have two souls in one body?"

"!!!" The original Anna hesitated for a moment, allowing Anna to take advantage of that opening to kick her. She then stood back up as the battle stopped at a standstill.

It seemed that the original Anna was actually curious about the same thing. She had just never thought about it.

The Thunder Berserker Spirit smiled as though he had been waiting for this question. "The spirit only resides in one's body. Why do you think so?"

"It's to create all the essentials like Spiritual Energy Reserve as well as the bridge that connects the spirit and the human, Assimilation." The original Anna answered.

"Correct. Then, what happens when there are two spirits residing in your body?"

"That's...." The original Anna contemplated while Anna answered, "I heard it from Noel. The bridge that connects the spirit and the human is the Spirit Seal. If we have two spirits, we will receive two spirit seals, or two bridges. This also applies to the reserves."

"You will basically be able to reach the limit twice. After all, the spirits are contracted to the bodies, not souls or anything else. In that case, what do you think about the soul? There is a spirit with a soul. You have witnessed such a person and I think you have understood a bit about the soul. So, what is the soul's role in your body?"

Both Annas fell into deep thought this time.

What was actually the role of the soul? They had never thought about it. They tried to connect the Spirit Seal, Spiritual Energy Reserve, Soul, Body, and their lives.

What did they actually learn regarding the spirits? Was there something related to the soul? Or had they just never thought it was related?

Seeing their confused expression, the Thunder Berserker Spirit gave another hint. "One of you already has them, but the other hasn't formed them."