

The Shining Star Above The Heaven

#Chapter 331: He Wants to See You - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 331: He Wants to See You

Chapter 331: He Wants to See You

Aldrian did not disturb Claude, allowing him time to process his emotions and thoughts. At a time like this, it was not appropriate for him to offer his opinion, as this was an internal struggle for Claude. He could only hope that Claude would make a good decision, even if it left scars on his heart.

He did not want to leave a variable like Princess Loraine alone without a decisive resolution. She was someone already deeply connected to the devils and had committed many acts that harmed the innocent. She was also at the stage of being *madly* in love with the deceased Lust Devil. Once she learned of the Lust Devil's fate, he could imagine she would do anything to take revenge against him.

He could perhaps erase her memories of the Lust Devil, but that would not erase her past sins. Moreover, the Duclan family believed in him and trusted that the princess would receive her judgment. It would not be fair to Princess Loraine's victims if he simply let her get away with it.

After more than half an hour, Claude finally returned to the room and stood near Aldrian before saying something that made Aldrian raise his eyebrows.

"I've already informed my father about our conversation and your achievements. He wants to see you in the imperial palace. Right now," he said.

Aldrian had not expected Prince Claude to inform the emperor about their conversation. If the emperor wanted to see him, then this was also his chance to establish a connection with the absolute ruler of the empire.

"Alright, lead the way."

After that, they left the private room and walked toward the nearest teleportation station. The situation in Larson City was still quite hectic because of what had happened a few hours ago, but it didn't really affect Aldrian or Claude, aside from the crowded teleportation station. Many people were still pouring into the city to witness the scene.

After waiting for a while, they were finally able to enter the teleportation portal leading to the capital of the Vindas Empire, Finna.

Once they stepped out of the teleportation portal, Aldrian was greeted by a new scene filled with luxurious buildings and the bustling activity of the capital city. Since Claude was still in disguise, the people did not realize that the prince of the empire had just stepped out of the teleportation portal, and no one knew Aldrian's face.

Aldrian also noticed a grand white palace in the distance from where he stood after exiting the teleportation portal and thought that it must be the imperial palace.

"Let's go. I know a place where we can rent a carriage. Although the palace is visible from here, it's still quite a distance away," Claude said.

With that, they walked toward one of the carriage rental stations. Once they secured a carriage with a coachman, they set off toward the imperial palace. Aldrian simply waited for the moment he would meet the emperor.

While Aldrian and Prince Claude were still on their way to the imperial palace, someone inside was growing increasingly nervous and anxious. She bit her fingernails and paced back and forth, unable to stop herself.

Princess Loraine had already heard from her guardian knight about what had happened in Larson City. She was truly grateful that the remnants of the Duclan family and the mysterious swordsman had eradicated the Larson family, taking the fact that she had connections to the devils to their graves.

However, even though the ones who had grasped her weakness were gone, she still could not feel at ease. Another threat remained—the Duclan family. She was certain they considered her one of their targets for revenge, and it was only a matter of time before they came for her.

She did not know whether they were aware of her connection to the devils or even the Larson family, but one fact remained true: because of her judgment, the Duclan family had been executed back then. Now, she felt uneasy, uncertain of what the remaining Duclan family members would do in the future. Would they continue to pursue revenge against her?

She had many questions about the Duclan family's movements over the past weeks. Why did it seem like they were avoiding the name of the imperial family in their path of revenge? Had they forgiven her or the imperial family? There was no way they would, and that thought kept her on edge, waiting for their next move.

Knock knock

Suddenly, she heard a knock on her room's door. When she opened it, she saw her guardian knight—Sir Klain.

"Your Highness, His Majesty asks to see you in his private room."

Princess Loraine paused and nodded her head.

"Alright, then what about the Duclan family? Do you know anything about what they will do? Have the devils contacted us?"

"No, Your Highness, I haven't received any contact from the devils since our last communication a few days ago. When I tried to reach them, the hidden place where we usually meet was unusually abandoned, and there were no traces of the devils there," Klain replied, shaking his head.

Princess Loraine sighed. She knew that their relationship had been strained because of her off-script actions within the Flamecrest family, which had caused the devils' plan to crumble. However, it was still the best course of action she could choose.

Since the devils still needed her as their proxy in the empire, they would not completely sever their connection with her, and that was something she knew well. They still contacted her from time to time, though their communication seemed more restrained and cautious.

From her perspective, the devils seemed to be distancing themselves from her, but still at a distance where she remained within their reach. She also couldn't entirely separate herself from the devils because of her past involvement with them. Although she felt scammed by how the devils had used the Lust Devil's name to manipulate her, there was nothing she could do. She could only move forward with the status quo and hope that Aldrian would keep his word.

Princess Loraine then left her room and walked toward her father's private chambers in the inner part of the palace. The room was lined with racks of books, and there were some luxurious pieces of furniture that appeared to be artifacts with unknown functions. She saw her father, the emperor, sitting at his desk at the far end of the room, near the window that overlooked the vast garden outside.

Emperor Herman saw his daughter's figure enter and gave her the warm smile he usually did, but the princess felt something different about it. She didn't know if it was just her imagination, but she felt that her father's smile seemed more bitter than sincere. She pushed that thought aside for now and gave a slight bow.

"I heard you were looking for me, Father."

Emperor Herman stood up from his seat and walked toward the sofa near his desk, where he usually received guests.

"Yes, have a seat, dear. I just want to see my daughter and talk to you. Does it bother you, my dear?" he said in his soft voice.

"Of course not, Father." She then took a seat across from him as he used his energy to bring two glasses of spiritual herb drink as refreshments and placed them on the table.

Emperor Herman stared at Loraine with a soft gaze, his expression reminiscent of her childhood. She resembled his late wife in many ways, and he treasured her deeply. She was his gem, the last fruit and proof of the love he had shared with his late wife. Whatever she wanted, he would try to fulfill it, making sure she was pampered to the bone.

He was more thankful that she did not become arrogant or do anything that would bring shame to the imperial family just because she was pampered by him. Instead, she made him proud with her talent and beauty. Her character also reminded him of his late wife, with her soft yet decisive nature in certain circumstances. There was nothing more he wanted from this perfect daughter of his.

However, the recent news he had heard and the conclusion he had reached made his heart wither. It felt suffocating, and he wanted to cry, but he couldn't. He could only stare at his daughter with his usual smile, a smile that no longer carried the sincerity it once did.

Princess Loraine noticed that her father was looking at her with a smile that felt strange, causing her to feel uneasy. This was the first time she had ever felt this way, and she blamed the recent events that had caused her to overthink everything.

After half a minute of silence, Emperor Herman finally broke it.

"My dear, we will have a guest—a special guest that I want to meet, and I hope you can accompany me in meeting them."

Princess Loraine became puzzled. A guest? And he wanted her to accompany him? Who could this guest be?

"Ah, he is here," the emperor said just before they heard a knock on the door.

"Your Majesty, His Highness has returned with a guest," a voice from outside resounded.

"Let them in," replied Emperor Herman.

Once the door opened, revealing the figures behind it, Princess Loraine widened her eyes and one of the figures also saw her and smiled.

Chapter 332: Emperor Herman's Sadness

As Princess Loraine saw the figures outside the door, her eyes widened, and her heartbeat quickened with nervousness. Aldrian and Prince Claude then entered the room. At the same time, Aldrian noticed the princess looking at him with a trembling gaze, prompting him to smile.

"Why is that man here?!" Princess Loraine thought.

Emperor Herman, who sensed the change in his daughter's demeanor and noticed her slight trembling, knew why his daughter like that. However, he put the matter aside for now as he stood up from his seat.

As he approached Aldrian, he couldn't help but be surprised by how young the person before him was. He had assumed that the mysterious swordmaster would be at least a middle-aged man, but Aldrian appeared to be in his teens.

He considered the possibility that this was merely a disguise for some unknown reason, but he still believed Aldrian was truly young—he could sense it. Nonetheless, he set aside the matter of age, deciding not to pursue it further.

"Father, I brought the swordmaster I told you about. He is the one who helped us," Prince Claude said while gesturing with his hand.

Aldrian gave a slight bow after the prince introduced him to Emperor Herman.

"So, you are the one many have been talking about? Rumors can say anything, but now that you are standing before me, I must admit they do not do you justice. What can I say? The previous generation will always be surpassed by the new. Welcome to the imperial palace," Emperor Herman said, offering his hand for a handshake.

Aldrian, of course, did not refuse the emperor's offer and accepted it.

"It is my honor to be invited here, Your Majesty. This truly gives my humble self an experience I will never forget."

"Ahahaha, you exaggerate. With your strength, I am sure you have experienced this many times already. Have a seat—it is not good to keep standing when you have just arrived."

They then sat near Princess Loraine, with Prince Claude sitting beside her.

"So, may I know your name? I would feel rude if I called you without knowing what to call you. Claude also did not mention your name when he communicated with me," Emperor Herman said.

"This one's name is Aldrian, Your Majesty."

Hearing his name, Emperor Herman embedded it in his memory as if it were something he must remember.

"Aldrian... a good name, a good name," he said.

The emperor then shifted his gaze to his daughter. What he had heard from Claude was still fresh in his mind—Loraine had met this young man before, something he had not expected. He decided to feign ignorance and asked his daughter,

"My dear, have you met this young man before? You have seemed strange since you saw him."

Princess Loraine paused for a moment.

"Uhm—" However, before she could say anything further, Aldrian had already cut her off.

"It is truly a surprise for me to meet Her Highness, the famous Princess Loraine. Today must be one of the most honored days of my life, as the heavens have allowed me to meet the entire imperial family," Aldrian said, looking at Princess Loraine with a smile.

He knew that if the emperor had already heard about his conversation with Claude, then he must also be aware that he knew the princess personally.

If the emperor was feigning ignorance, then he would follow along with the act.

Aldrian then looked at the emperor again. "We have already met before in Flamecrest City under unexpected circumstances, Your Majesty. At that time, I was truly impressed by the princess's character—she seemed loyal and the type who would never easily abandon her beloved."

Hearing Aldrian's words, everyone in the room more or less understood the implicit message behind them.

Princess Loraine's heart was already racing, and she couldn't keep it calm. She also knew exactly what Aldrian meant, and now, she was more afraid than ever that her family would finally discover what she had done behind their backs.

Emperor Herman suddenly covered the entire room by activating the soundproof formation, ensuring that no one outside could hear what they discussed inside.

He then looked at his daughter before turning to Aldrian again.

"Young Aldrian, regarding the issue with the Duclan and Larson families, as well as the plot of the devils in the Flamecrest Grand Duchy, may I hear it from you personally? How far were you involved in this matter, and how did you manage to uncover and resolve the devils' plot in such a short time? I've heard more or less from Claude, but I want to hear the details directly from you, Young Aldrian," he said.

"Of course, Your Majesty, I would gladly tell you, and even provide a more detailed explanation than when I spoke to His Highness," Aldrian replied.

He then retold his findings and experiences, starting with the resolution of the situation in Flamecrest and continuing up to the most recent events with the Larson family. Emperor Herman and prince Claude listened intently to Aldrian, especially Emperor Herman, who seemed to be absorbing every word. He paid close attention, wanting to ensure that what Aldrian was saying aligned with what he had in mind.

Throughout the story, Aldrian subtly implied that some of the incidents could not have occurred without someone from the imperial family's intervention, and everyone in the room was not oblivious to this.

Princess Loraine's mind was in chaos, as she felt like she was on the edge of a cliff, and it was only a matter of time before she was discovered. Truthfully, she was shocked by how Aldrian knew some information that was only privy to her and the devils in the Vindas Empire. What was more, she was stunned to realize that Aldrian was actually the mysterious swordsman, a figure whom many had sought. He is now a living legend among cultivators across the continent.

"No wonder, he can kidnap Rodwin!" Princess Loraine thought. If he's the mysterious swordsman capable of causing phenomenon across the continent, then he could certainly accomplish that.

Once Aldrian had finished telling the details, which took more than an hour, a brief silence followed. After a few moments, Emperor Herman turned his gaze toward his daughter.

"Dear, as you know, the recent events involving the devils are all somehow connected to your case, and this is no coincidence. So, would you mind telling me your side of the story? How did you manage to solve the devils' case in the past? I never asked you about this before, but the recent troubles have made me start questioning the truth behind it. Please, child, do tell me the details of what happened when you visited the Duclan family, your connection with the Larson family, and what you did inside Flamecrest Grand Duchy," he said.

Princess Loraine already knew that she would likely be found out after this, as Aldrian's story had already insinuated the involvement of someone from the imperial family, and who else could be the most suspect but her?

She longed to escape, regretting her decision to meet her father now. If she had known that Aldrian would come at this time, she would have left the imperial palace until he had gone. But there was no remedy for regret, and now, she was desperately trying to think of a way to get out of this place.

Seeing his daughter fidgeting and clearly nervous, Emperor Herman's heart sank deeper, and he felt a suffocating weight in his chest.

"Father, I really don't know about the Larson family or their connection to the devils. I didn't realize that what I did would lead to the destruction of the innocent. Please forgive me, Father," Princess Loraine said, her voice full of desperation.

"Then what about the incident at the brothel in Larson city? Your brother's undercover mission was known by only a few, and you were the only one who could have directed him to the brothel to follow the young master of the Larson family. The source of the information came from someone associated with your guardian knight, and they could not have known about your brother's undercover mission. So it can only mean one thing—it came from you."

"I... I..." Princess Loraine wanted to refute, but the emperor continued.

"What about the fact that Sir Klain's traces can be found in hidden locations within parts of the capital and the Larson Grand Duchy? And the death of one of the Seven Devils of Annihilation inside our dungeon, where she was being held under heavy guard? After my investigation, I found that the only way someone could move freely within the dungeon, knowing all the formations, and cause the guards around the palace to drop their guard, was if they met with a figure of authority. Sir Klain was known to be near the dungeon at the time of the incident. Do you have anything to say about that?"

"I... I..." Princess Loraine's eyes trembled as she struggled to find the words, her mind a chaotic mess. She couldn't bring herself to answer her father's questioning gaze. Seeing her at a loss, Emperor Herman suddenly stood up and walked toward the window, his gaze fixed on the vast garden of the imperial palace.

A deep sadness enveloped him, a sorrow he had never felt before. All the signs pointed to the undeniable truth—his daughter was guilty of something that could harm not just herself, but the entire empire.

"Loraine, how could you do this?" A trembling voice cut through the silence—Prince Claude's voice, laced with hurt.

Chapter 333: The Princess's True Face

"Loraine, how could you do this?" Prince Claude's voice was laced with hurt.

Princess Loraine looked at her brother, who stared at her with a wounded expression, causing her heart to churn. How could this happen? She wanted to deny their accusations as much as possible, but how could she when the evidence against her was overwhelming and she was unprepared for this?

She suddenly covered her face as her body trembled. It was unclear whether she was laughing or crying, as no sound escaped her.

The others watched the princess but chose to wait for her answer.

"I really love him, and I will do anything for him." Suddenly, the princess's voice rang out.

Hearing her answer, the emperor finally lost control. He slammed the table beside him, his voice thundering as he shouted at his daughter for the first time in his life.

"Him'?" The emperor's voice was filled with disbelief. "Do you mean the damned Lust Devil? How can you fall in love with a devil—one of the Seven Deadly Sins, no less? They only want to use you!"

"He is not a damned devil, Father! He is different from the others! I know him very well, and he even said he would help us!" she shouted at her father.

Hearing her tone and the way she spoke to him, the emperor felt as if his heart had been crushed to dust. It was as if he was no longer looking at his daughter but at a stranger wearing her skin. She had never spoken to him like this in her entire life.

"You have already been fooled by the devil's intrigue. There is no way the devils want to help you—forget about us. What does he even want to help with?" the emperor said.

"No! He will definitely help us! He has a way to save us when the time of the prophecy comes! He said that when that time arrives, no beings other than devils and their associates will be able to survive. Our family can be saved then!"

"You—" Emperor Herman felt as if he was losing his mind because of her. What had the devils done to make her fall for this nonsense? And to make her fall in love this deeply? He wanted to crack open her skull to see what was inside her brain, to tear open her chest and see what had happened to her heart.

Where did it go wrong? Had he failed in raising her, for her to be fooled by the devils?

"Is that bastard really so valuable to you? That you would go so far as you tried to take your own brother's life in the process? That you would dare to intend to kill your own blood?" the emperor said, his aura fluctuating.

"Is he so treasured to you that you would forget your roots and your own family?!" he shouted, his voice shaking the room as Emperor Herman failed to control his emotions.

Prince Claude also looked at his little sister, his expression filled with hurt. The sense of betrayal he felt was unlike anything he had ever experienced. He simply couldn't understand the drastic change in her. How had his once pure little sister turned into someone so different, someone who could raise her voice at her own family, someone who had been completely brainwashed?

Princess Loraine gritted her teeth as she looked at her father and brother.

"I have no reason to refute that. But I had to do it. He was digging too deep, approaching something he was never meant to. I just want to continue living and see him—"

"You want to see Rodwin, the Lust Devil, but I don't think you can do that, Your Highness."

Suddenly, Aldrian cut off her words, making Princess Loraine freeze. She turned to him, her eyes trembling.

"What do you mean?" she asked, her voice shaking.

"What do I mean?" Aldrian repeated, his expression calm. "The Lust Devil is already dead. He hasn't been with me since I first met you."

Hearing that, everyone in the room widened their eyes in shock.

For Prince Claude and Emperor Herman, this was something they had never heard before. The death of one of the Seven Deadly Sins was a joyous moment for the entire continent, as it meant the devils' power would weaken. How could such news not have spread or been known yet?

As for Princess Loraine, her face quickly shifted to one of fury. Without any warning, she attacked Aldrian, unleashing one of her flame techniques from her palm.

Prince Claude and Emperor Herman, who hadn't expected Princess Loraine to strike suddenly, moved to block her. However, Aldrian was quicker, using his spatial manipulation to trap the surrounding space around the princess, rendering her immobile.

She tried to push through her attack, but the space was so resistant that she couldn't even move an inch. Despite this, her expression remained unchanged, and she looked at Aldrian with absolute rage.

"You're a liar! You fooled me! You said that he was alive and in your hands! You bastard, I'll kill you!"

She sounded like a madwoman, her tears mixing with her rage to show just how desperate she was.

"Aaaaaaggghhh!" she screamed with all her might as she tried to break free from the spatial lock.

The sight made Claude flinch, as he had never seen his little sister act like a maniac before. The emperor, on the other hand, could only show his sadness. His heart ached as he saw how deeply his daughter had been corrupted. She didn't hesitate to attack the person who had killed her supposed lover, even though that bastard was a devil.

"Amanda, I've already failed you in raising our daughter," the emperor thought to himself.

Aldrian merely looked at the princess calmly as he leaned closer, his gaze fixed on her eyes.

"To be honest, I pity you for falling into the lap of someone like the Lust Devil. You placed your love in the wrong place and discarded your bonds with your true family. Do you know that the Lust Devil doesn't consider you one of his own? You're just someone he can manipulate. He needed your status, and he got it easily because of your foolishness in falling for his charm," he said in a low voice.

"No... No! He is not like that, he is—"

"Your Majesty, from your judgment, what are we supposed to do with Her Highness? I know this is heartbreaking, but I want to know what you will do with her," Aldrian interrupted, not wanting to hear any more from Princess Loraine.

The emperor clenched his fist and looked at his daughter. As the emperor of an empire, he must uphold the laws of the land, and what his daughter had done was truly a severe crime. However, as a father, he desperately wanted to find a way for his daughter to repent for her mistake and return to the pure girl he once knew.

For the first time in a long while, he couldn't decisively choose what path to take.

"Your Majesty, in my opinion, the princess must be punished to bring justice for her victims. In this case, it's the Duclan family, who have already caused havoc because of their thirst for revenge. You need to assure them with her punishment, as that's the only thing that will prevent them from dragging the imperial family further into this mess," Aldrian said, looking at the emperor.

"If they find that the imperial family doesn't give Princess Loraine the retribution they deem satisfying, I can only imagine the future headaches they'll cause. That's something best avoided, Your Majesty. Their thirst for revenge runs deep, after all."

"Also, there's me. With her grudge against me, I don't think I can hold myself back if she comes at me with that kind of killing intent. My apologies for being presumptuous, but the only reason I haven't killed her long ago is because I respect you, as her father and as the sovereign of this empire, who will take care of her deserved punishment."

"I hope you can harden your heart and enact justice, but I know it will be difficult. Death is the only answer, if you ask me, but maybe that is too cruel for you. So, I would like to ask Your Majesty, what is your proposal for the princess's fate?" Aldrian asked, looking at the emperor.

Emperor Herman also looked at Aldrian. Under normal circumstances, if anyone else had spoken those words to him, he might have instantly punished them, because the underlying message was nothing short of a threat. Although Aldrian had toned down his words, the real meaning behind them was undeniably arrogant—it seemed as if Aldrian could kill Princess Loraine at any time, without the imperial family's consent.

However, Aldrian was someone who had earned the right to carry such an attitude and make such suggestions. What he had said was not wrong, and he needed to set things right for the Duclan family, whose name had been sullied for so long because of his daughter's actions.

The princess continued to mumble and shout, desperately trying to escape from the spatial lock, but she couldn't. Aldrian then made the space locking the princess soundproof, ensuring her frantic voice could no longer be heard.

After several minutes of silence, Emperor Herman looked at his daughter, and he finally made a decision.

Chapter 334: The Emperor's Decision

"As emperor, I have decided to punish Princess Loraine Avandi by crippling her cultivation, rendering her a normal human without any cultivation. She will also be placed under house arrest in her chambers for the rest of her life."

"As for the Duclan family, I will personally restore their name and reinstate their noble status and territory. They will be greatly compensated for their suffering, but I will elevate their noble rank to that of a grand duchy," Emperor Herman said with a stern expression. Although his heart ached for his daughter, he could not afford to hesitate at a time like this.

Aldrian, looking at the emperor, understood why he made such a decision. In the end, he couldn't bring himself to kill his own daughter, even after all the damage she had

caused. From the looks of it, this was the harshest punishment Aldrian could expect from a father who had transitioned from loving parent to strict ruler, upholding the final judgment.

If that was the case, then he could only let her be. As long as she had lost her power and status within her family, she was essentially finished. The devils would have no use for her and would not attempt to contact her. All her privileges would be stripped away, leaving her with no authority over anything as part of her punishment. Pushing for more would only strain his relationship with the imperial family, possibly even leading to unnecessary restraint.

He had no intention of letting their relationship become strained, especially since he needed their cooperation when the time of prophecy arrived.

He assumed the emperor would provide the public with a reason to prevent them from questioning the princess's absence when she eventually vanished from their sight. The only potential issue was the Duclan family's reaction. He wasn't sure if this punishment would be enough for them. If they still found it unsatisfactory, the only option for him or the emperor would be to persuade them until they accepted it.

In this situation, one side would have to take a step back—if not, things could turn ugly. And he knew the emperor wouldn't tolerate being controlled or pressured into doing something against his will.

"Do you find this acceptable, young Aldrian?" Emperor Herman asked. Aldrian responded with a nod.

"Then, young Aldrian, I want you to help me communicate with the Duclan family. Please persuade them that this is the best punishment for her and that she will never trouble them again. I believe they will listen to you more than to me. I will personally meet the young miss of the Duclan family later."

"Alright, I'll try," Aldrian replied.

He then touched the forehead of the princess, who was still trapped in the spatial lock. She continued to shout at him and the others, but no sound escaped due to the soundproof space he had created. With a surge of lightning energy into her soul, he instantly made her lose consciousness.

After ensuring Princess Loraine had fainted, Aldrian released the spatial lock, causing her body to fall. However, before she could hit the table, Prince Claude had already caught her. Looking at his unconscious sister, Claude could only bite his lips, holding back his sorrow before gently placing her on the sofa.

"Now that we've reached a conclusion on this matter, I'd like to take this opportunity to discuss something with you, Your Majesty. This is a much greater problem for the future than what we face now," Aldrian suddenly said.

Hearing this, Emperor Herman and Prince Claude looked at Aldrian in curiosity.

"What is it?" the emperor asked.

"This is about the prophecy, Your Majesty."

At the mention of the prophecy, both Claude and Emperor Herman narrowed their eyes.

"What about the prophecy do you wish to discuss, young Aldrian?" the emperor asked.

"Your Majesty, to be honest, I more or less know what we will face when the prophecy unfolds. I have already met with several leaders of powerful forces across the continent to discuss cooperation for when the time comes. This is a matter that requires the united efforts of all the major powers on the continent," Aldrian said.

He then explained the situation regarding the prophecy and emphasized the necessity of working together to repel the devils.

He didn't reveal the exact nature of the "thing" that would invade their continent, but he told them that a being of immense strength would aid the devils. When that time came, the empires on this continent would not survive unless they worked together. The only option was to cooperate, regardless of the background or affiliations of those involved.

They had to set aside any grudges they held against other powers on the continent. Once the prophecy's time arrived, their past conflicts would only weaken them, making it disastrous if they failed to unite against the devils.

"So this is some kind of alliance, and a few leaders have already agreed to it?" the emperor asked.

"Yes, Your Majesty. I have already spoken to them, and they support me—at least for now. The Doria and Forgeheart Kingdoms have agreed to my proposal and decided to join. I also have a special connection to the sovereign of the Ivory Empire, the Heavenly Direction Church, and the demon territory, particularly the three great sects there. Although I have yet to speak with them about this matter, I believe they will support this alliance. Let's just say I've done something that ensures they will follow my decision," Aldrian replied.

Emperor Herman pondered seriously, setting aside his sentimental side and fully embracing his role as ruler. His daughter's case was one matter, but the prophecy was not something to take lightly. He knew that Aldrian's words were reasonable.

What truly shocked him was the extent of Aldrian's connections—he had ties to so many powerful sovereigns across the continent.

If even the Doria Empire, their long-standing rival, had agreed to form this alliance, then surely they could put aside their own rivalry with neighboring empires like the Vindas Empire.

This only showed that the old man from the Doria family also trusted Aldrian, which made him wonder how Aldrian had persuaded him to join this plan. If that old man could set aside their rivalry, then he could surely achieve much. He also realized the importance of the alliance and began leaning toward joining it, after all.

The emperor looked at Aldrian.

"If this alliance determines our future, then of course I will join. In times of crisis, there is no room for hesitation."

Hearing the emperor's words, Aldrian smiled, feeling grateful to Emperor Herman for agreeing to his proposal.

"Thank you for your cooperation, Your Majesty. As for the details, I will inform you once I have secured the support from the rest of the territories, which only leaves Atria Empire and the Buddhist Sect."

After that, their conversation shifted to more private matters, such as Aldrian's origins, but Aldrian responded with his usual standard answers.

Their conversation lasted for over an hour and a half, and Aldrian finally stood up to say his goodbyes.

"Your Majesty, I believe I have already taken up too much of your time. Once again, thank you for inviting me here," Aldrian said.

"Ah, you're not taking any of my time. In fact, I truly enjoyed our conversation, despite the situation we've just experienced. I hope you can visit the palace more often; I'd like to have more conversations with you, young Aldrian," the emperor replied with a smile.

Not long after, Aldrian left the room, escorted by Prince Claude. Once the emperor was alone with the still unconscious Princess Loraine, he sighed, his expression weary as he looked at his daughter. His sadness returned, but he tried to bury it deeply. There was something he needed to do to correct his daughter's mistakes.

"It's truly a pleasure to have a conversation with you. Once again, thank you, young master. Thank you for helping us uncover the truth and for maintaining the stability of

our empire," Prince Claude said to Aldrian as they stood in front of the palace gate, the carriage already waiting for Aldrian.

"The pleasure is mine, Your Highness. It is also my duty to ensure the stability and harmony of this place." Aldrian took the prince's hand in a handshake before entering the carriage and heading to the teleportation station.

In the middle of his journey to the teleportation station, Aldrian gazed out at the bustling capital city. With his visit to the imperial palace now complete, his time in the Vindas Empire was nearly finished. For the remaining issues, the imperial family could handle them on their own, he had already done enough to assist them.

As he enjoyed the view of the city, he suddenly felt a tug in his mind and instantly knew what it was.

"What is it, dear? You've already contacted me using this technique, and we just separated a few hours ago," Aldrian said with a smile, speaking in his mind.

"Stop it, I contacted you to tell you something," Sylphia's voice rang inside his mind. This was the technique Aldrian had created so they could communicate without needing any communication artifacts, allowing them to instantly connect their minds like a voice transmission. The technique was inspired by the method he used to communicate with his slaves through *Everlasting Demonic Follower*.

At this moment, only Aldrian and Sylphia could use this method, as he had just created it for their effective communication.

"You have a guest waiting for you at the inn right now," Sylphia continued.

"A guest?"

Chapter 335: A Request From Someone

"A guest?" Aldrian thought to himself.

"Who is the guest?" Aldrian asked.

"Take a guess. The clue is that it's someone from outside the empire but still nearby," Sylphia said in a joking tone.

Aldrian just smiled at the playful side of his woman when she spoke to him. He closed his eyes and tried to look into the domain he had created in the inn in Larson City.

He and his group had been staying at the inn since they arrived in Larson City, meaning they had already been there for more than a week.

After connecting to the domain, he used his Eyes of Heaven to peer into the inn and finally, he found what he was looking for. However, he was surprised by the unexpected figure now sitting on the ground floor at a table with Xin Haotian and Sylphia.

"Arthur?"

What Aldrian saw was Arthur, the leader of the Paladins of the Heavenly Direction Church. He was wearing a brown robe to conceal his features so that people wouldn't recognize him, but it did nothing to hide him from Aldrian.

"Why is he there?" Aldrian thought.

The last time they met was back in Forgeheart Kingdom when he had warned Arthur about the traitor in the Heavenly Direction Church. Seeing Arthur here now meant something must have happened—something significant enough for the leader of the Paladins to come in person.

Aldrian then replied to Sylphia.

"Ah, I see. I already know my guest; you don't have to tell me."

"You're lying."

"He's from the Heavenly Direction Church, right? I already know, dear. And I think it's someone I know who came."

Aldrian smiled, sensing Sylphia's disbelief on the other side.

"How do you—"

"Alright, dear, I still need some time to get back to the inn. Right now, I'm in the capital city of the Vindas Empire, Finna. The emperor wanted to meet me, so I just finished meeting with him. Anyway, tell the guest to wait for a while. I'll be there soon. See you."

"Wait—"

Aldrian instantly cut off his communication with Sylphia. He then felt a tug in his mind, but he just smiled and ignored her repeated calling sign. He could only imagine her cute pouting at this moment, making him want to rush back to the inn and cup that face of hers.

He kept his eyes closed as the carriage continued moving toward the nearest teleportation station.

At another location where Sylphia was, she stomped her feet and put on an irritated expression. But then, remembering that she was in front of others, she tried to calm herself. However, Xin Haotian and Arthur had already sensed the change in her mood, though they did not ask her what had happened. Instead, Arthur narrowed his eyes at Xin Haotian.

Since earlier, he hadn't said anything to Xin Haotian. When he tried looking for Aldrian, he had accidentally sensed the presence of someone he knew. When he saw that figure sitting alone, drawing no attention to his surroundings, and considering the style and aura he exuded, he confirmed that it was Xin Haotian, the Sword Saint.

"Although I have my guess, it's still unexpected that the Sword Saint is actually moving with the same group as him. Have you been with him for long?" Arthur finally said.

"You can say that," Xin Haotian replied.

Sylphia, who arrived after Arthur met Xin Haotian, looked at the two and felt a strange vibe between them. From her perspective, Arthur seemed to be eyeing his rival, or someone he was trying to surpass, but Xin Haotian appeared unbothered by Arthur. What Sylphia observed was that Xin Haotian regarded Arthur as just another cultivator, offering no special treatment whatsoever.

His calmness and elegance were truly worthy of being called the strongest of the Ten Great Swordmasters of the continent—well, that is, excluding Aldrian, of course. Xin Haotian seemed different in front of Aldrian. Although he still wore a calm expression, he expressed his own sense of humor with Aldrian, often jabbing at each other. He was more like a friend to Aldrian.

After Xin Haotian answered Arthur, the situation fell silent again, with only the sounds of their surroundings resounding. To break the awkward atmosphere, Sylphia decided to start the conversation.

"Sir Arthur, how do you know that Aldrian is here?"

"Ah, you must be the princess—"

"Don't reveal my identity here, Sir Arthur."

"My apologies, miss, but how could I not know his location when his traces are everywhere? Now that he's caused another uproar in this city, of course, I could easily follow his trail in my own way, and by chance, I saw this guy here. So, I'm confident that Aldrian must be here." Arthur said while giving a sign with his head toward Xin Haotian.

"I see. Then why do you need to see him?"

"I came to this place under someone's orders, and it's an invitation that I must deliver directly to Aldrian. This is also that person's request," Arthur replied.

"Invitation?"

"Yes, an invitation. But my apologies, I can't explain further until Aldrian himself arrives," Arthur said, slightly lowering his head in apology.

Sylphia narrowed her eyes as she looked at Arthur. She seemed to sense something and suddenly asked again.

"This figure— is it a man or a woman?"

Arthur looked at Sylphia, puzzled, but he still answered her.

"It's a woman."Silent.

The atmosphere turned awkward again as Sylphia didn't continue the conversation, and Arthur also chose not to speak much about it. Inside Sylphia's mind, however, many questions formed.

"A woman from the Heavenly Direction Church? Who is she? I've never seen or heard from Aldrian that he's met any woman from the church."

Since becoming Aldrian's lover, she couldn't help but become more sensitive toward unfamiliar women and found herself overthinking. She wasn't sure if this was simply the effect of being in the early phase of their relationship, where her love burned with intensity, but she felt a sense of jealousy—not in a negative way, though.

She just couldn't control her feelings and knew it could be unhealthy if it became exaggerated. She didn't want to burden Aldrian with her jealousy. Still, whenever she remembered his handsome face, without disguise, one that could entrance any woman on the continent, she pouted in sulking. Even in his disguise now, his face still exuded his original handsomeness and charisma.

"That's because of his handsomeness and charisma, which always attract the opposite sex," she thought, stomping her feet inside her mind.

She knew that in the future, when Aldrian finally revealed his true face to the world, countless women would want to be with him. She thought that even women from high-ranking noble families wouldn't hesitate to become his concubines. She didn't find it taboo, as the concept of a harem was popular on the continent.

However, for elves like her, the concept of a harem wasn't as common, and elves rarely took more than one spouse.

Even more so for noble or imperial families like hers, their companions must be special and are meant to be their only companion for life due to their traditions and status. This is also why they must marry within their own race—there is no precedent of an elf from an imperial family marrying outside of their race. This meant that she would be the first to break that tradition.

Aldrian, being human, would naturally have different traditions and values than the elves, and she had to be ready for whatever the future might hold. If, by chance, he were to create a harem, she had to ensure that she would be his first official wife, as she was his first. As for the others, she would need to know about them first.

For instance, if Aldrian wanted to form a harem now, the only candidate she would approve of would be someone she already knew well, such as...

"Baek Ji-Min."

Sylphia shook her head. Her thoughts had already drifted too far again—this was the kind of overthinking that sometimes took hold of her.

"It looks like I need to talk to him about it in the future," she thought.

They continued to sit together in the awkward atmosphere for another thirty minutes until Sylphia finally saw a familiar figure entering the inn. Her expression turned to a smile as the figure smiled back at her.

Aldrian had finally arrived, and he approached her table.

"Finally, you came. I've been waiting for you," Arthur said with a smile.

"What a surprise to see the leader of the Paladins of the Heavenly Direction Church here. To make you come all the way here, it must be something important," Aldrian replied.

"Well, you could say that."

Aldrian then sat beside Sylphia and looked at Arthur.

"So, what's it about? What's so important that you've been waiting for me?"

"I came here at the direct request of the Saintess. She wants to see you personally," Arthur said with a serious expression.

Hearing that, Aldrian was stunned.

"The Saintess wants to see me?"

Chapter 336: You Will Forget About Your Grudge

The Saintess of the Heavenly Direction Church holds a special status and position within the church's hierarchy. Politically, the Saintess is not as influential as the Pope, but in religious matters, she is even more revered. This is because of her ability to 'communicate' with the heavens.

Another unique aspect of the Saintess's position is that she is not always chosen from within the church's ranks; she can come from outside the church as well. Regardless of status, the appearance of the Saintess is revealed by the heavens, and the church knows how to identify each generation's Saintess through divine signs. In other words, the Saintess is chosen by the heavens, making it a highly revered status that can even surpass that of the Pope.

Aldrian had already heard about the Saintess of this generation. Many said she was unique, even compared to her predecessors. His curiosity grew as he thought about meeting the Saintess that so many spoke of.

"The Saintess wants to see me? For what? Does she need something from me?" Aldrian asked.

"To be honest, I'm not entirely sure either," Arthur replied. "But it seems she received some kind of sign that she needs to see you. She asked me personally and discreetly, so no one else in the church knows I'm here. You'd better ask the Saintess herself, because I really don't know the details."

"A sign?" Aldrian thought. He didn't fully understand the Saintess's abilities, and his curiosity only grew stronger.

However, he knew that it was still too soon to leave the empire. There were still some matters he needed to take care of. He looked at Arthur.

"I see. I would also like to meet the Saintess who is said to be special, but I don't think I can leave the empire just yet. There are still some things here that I need to take care of."

"May I know how long you will be staying?"

"Well, until my business here is finished, but I don't think it will take too long, so you don't have to worry," Aldrian answered.

Arthur tapped the table as if he were pondering something before looking at Aldrian.

"Alright, I will stay here for a while. You can take care of your business, and once you're done, just let me know."

Aldrian nodded. He then stood up and left the inn, followed by Sylphia. He still needed to talk to the Duclan family about Princess Loraine's punishment and their next course of action. The sooner they finished, the better.

In a hidden part of Larson City, two figures hung in a truly pathetic state, their hands tied to the ceiling of a dark room. Their bodies were covered in wounds and bruises—clear traces of violence. The once-noble appearance that had defined them was now completely overshadowed by their miserable condition.

Before long, the door to the dark room opened, revealing a beautiful woman with shoulder-length black hair. Carol stepped inside with an expressionless face and stopped in front of one of the figures. She stood before Clark, the young master of the Larson family, and looked at his swollen, bruised eyes. Blood trickled past them, forcing him to keep them shut.

Beneath his body, a bloodstain served as silent evidence of the torture he had endured in this place. The man did not react, even as she stood there for a few seconds. She then patted his cheek a few times, leaning her head slightly to get a clearer look at his eyes beneath the bruises.

"Wake up. Don't you know that today is your special day?"

Clark did not answer, but Carol didn't seem to care.

"You're going to be even more famous after this. Isn't that great? Your fame will surely rise after today." She then glanced at the figure beside him. "Along with your father."

She smiled warmly before looking back at Clark.

"You know, I've been waiting for this day for so long. And now that it's finally here, it gives me the ultimate satisfaction. Don't worry about what happens next. You'll be freed, and you won't feel any pain anymore."

Clark did not answer. His eyes seemed deadpan, as if he had no spirit left to live. Carol truly enjoyed this side of Clark and was about to speak again. However, she then heard footsteps behind her and a voice from one of her family members.

"Milady, our benefactor has come to see you."

Hearing that, Carol raised her eyebrows and, without hesitation, left the room. She walked toward another room and saw Aldrian already seated there, wearing a different mask from the one he had worn when he became the guardian during the attack on the Larson family's mansion. Beside him sat another figure—this time, a woman whom Carol assumed must be the elf accompanying him.

Once she entered, she immediately closed the door.

"Young master, young miss, what a surprise. My apologies for not greeting you in more appropriate attire," Carol said with courtesy.

"It's okay. I came to tell you something. It's about Princess Loraine," Aldrian said as he removed his mask, followed by Sylphia.

Hearing Aldrian mention the princess, Carol narrowed her eyes, a surge of fury rising in her chest. Though her anger wasn't as intense as what she felt toward Clark and the Larson family, the princess's judgment had been the catalyst that ended her family's life. Everything her family had built was destroyed by that one decision.

A premature judgment that had ignored every defense her parents made, even though they had been deceived by the Larson family. If only the princess had not passed that judgment at the time, her family might have been able to survive and find a way out.

"What about her, young master?" Carol asked.

"Carol, what I'm about to tell you may not make you happy, but I still have to tell you so you can consider it."

Carol fell silent, sensing that Aldrian knew something she didn't. After a moment, Aldrian finally revealed what he had discussed with Emperor Herman. He told her about the emperor's decision and the fate that awaited the princess in the future. He also explained the reasoning behind that decision and its potential impact on the empire.

He explained all of this to Carol so she would understand why the emperor's final decision was what it was. Carol, however, sometimes gritted her teeth, holding back her fury as Aldrian continued his explanation. What she heard from him felt like being asked to let go of the princess and allow her to live—albeit with all of her privileges stripped and her body crippled.

Although it sounded cruel and deserved, Carol felt that it wasn't enough. What she wanted was for the princess to be publicly punished or even executed, for her wrongdoings toward Duclan family. She wanted the princess's sins to be acknowledged in front of the masses. Her family's reputation had been tarnished by the princess, so it only seemed fair that the princess's reputation be crushed in return.

But from Aldrian's explanation, she also understood the implications if the princess were punished according to her desires. Causing the entire empire to plunge into instability was beyond her target and would only add unnecessary bloodshed.

Additionally, for the emperor to compensate her and her family after their misfortune showed his goodwill in restoring the Duclan family's name.

Carol lowered her head, clenching her fists. She couldn't bring herself to ask more from Aldrian because everything he had given her so far was more than enough. Without his help, there was no way she could have enacted her revenge on the Larson family or gotten the emperor to punish the princess.

"Carol, I know you still harbor a grudge against the princess, but there's another big event coming that will make you forget all of your revenge. When that time comes, you'll need to protect your family. No, I dare say that at that time, you'll forget everything except for yourself. The stability of this empire will be crucial when that event arrives," Aldrian said, voicing his opinion once more.

"A big event?"

"Yes, the prophesied time by the Heavenly Direction Church. You will need to prepare yourself for that time, and believe me, your revenge or grudge will be forgotten because of the chaos that will unfold," Aldrian said.

Carol had already heard about the prophecy from the church, told to her by her parents, since at the time the church announced this prophecy to the powers across the continent, she still had her family.

She looked at Aldrian.

"Do you know what kind of event we will face, young master?" Carol asked.

Aldrian nodded.

"There will be war, Carol—a war that will decide our continent's future," Aldrian said, his expression serious.

Seeing Aldrian's serious expression for the first time, Carol felt that the situation might be much worse than she had thought.

"Anyway, that's for the future. Let's focus on the present. You still have something to deal with regarding the father and son of the Larson family, right? The imperial family has given you the right to judge them however you see fit and support whatever actions you choose to take," Aldrian continued.

Carol sighed as her gaze turned chilling. Yes, today was the day she would finally show herself to the world without any disguise and punish the Larson family!

Chapter 337: The Execution

Amidst the rubble of what was once the Larson family's mansion with the corpse of the Cerberus, the Blue Dragon Battalion remains on guard, securing the area. Now, additional cultivators from the imperial family have arrived to assist in clearing the

remains of the Cerberus. The lingering death aura from the corpse is still strong and intimidating, but they attempt to suppress it using their elemental energy.

There are three Middle Emperor Stage cultivators in the area who are also helping to secure the site and attempting to cleanse it of the lingering death energy from the Cerberus's corpse. However, they are quite overwhelmed by the remnants of this energy due to its immense strength. Every time they try to suppress it with their own elemental energy, their energy is immediately erased.

The corrosive nature of the death energy is truly terrifying, and this is the first time they have encountered anything like it. As a result, the corpse remains in place, as they are unable to move it to a safer location.

Not far from the corpse, Commander Shang observes the operation. Beside him stand two other Middle Emperor Stage cultivators, both from the imperial family but belonging to different knight orders.

One of them has a large, muscular build and carries a greatsword on his back. His appearance is truly intimidating, making people instinctively avoid him upon meeting him. He is Viktor, one of the commanders of the imperial family.

The other is a handsome young man with long black hair. He exudes a serene aura and is the type who prefers not to stand out. He is Alexi, also one of the commanders of the imperial family.

"How in the world did the mysterious swordsman defeat a being like this?" Viktor asked. Even though he had a larger build than everyone else here, he couldn't help but feel a chill in the presence of the Cerberus's corpse.

"With just one slash. If you had seen it firsthand, you would have been amazed by its power and elegance. I'm telling you, he is truly strong—perhaps the only one capable of comprehending a divine technique," Commander Shang replied.

Alexi remained silent, gazing at the corpse. However, he shared the same sentiment as Viktor—this beast's corpse exuded an intimidating presence even in death. He could only imagine how powerful it had been when it was still alive.

Commander Shang continued observing the corpse when he suddenly noticed someone standing on top of it. The other two commanders saw the figure as well, followed by many others in the area. They were stunned—none of them had sensed this person's presence until now, when he suddenly appeared atop the corpse.

But then, Commander Shang felt a sense of familiarity with the figure. A moment later, he recalled the back of the mysterious swordsman. This figure had the same posture as that swordsman.

"Who are you?! State your—" Viktor began to demand, taking a stance, ready to attack. But before he could finish, Commander Shang stopped him with a hand gesture.

Shang shot Viktor a warning look before turning his gaze back to the figure standing on top of the corpse. The person was dressed in a black robe and wore a mask to conceal his features, but Shang knew—this was the real deal. This was the swordsman.

"May I know why you are here, Your Excellency? We thought you had disappeared somewhere after defeating this creature," Commander Shang asked respectfully.

At his words, everyone's eyes widened as they looked at the masked figure once again.

That is the mysterious swordsman?!

This was the first time they had seen the figure up close, and they couldn't even sense him! The other two commanders were also shocked as they observed him once again. They couldn't detect any aura or cultivation from this man, yet they did not underestimate him—after all, he was the mysterious swordsman.

Aldrian, who had just arrived to assist the others, looked at Commander Shang but did not respond. Truthfully, he felt guilty for leaving the corpse without purifying it first. After defeating the Cerberus, he had only purified the blood that had spilled across parts of the land, neglecting the main body, which was now split in two.

But it seemed that even the remnants of death energy from the corpse were still too much for these people to handle, so he needed to lend them a hand. He wasn't surprised—after all, it was a Cerberus. These people would have stood no chance in its presence, let alone when it was still alive, as it had been far stronger than them.

With a wave of his hand, his golden energy spread across the entire corpse, enveloping it.

The people were stunned by the sudden spread of the golden energy, and for the first time in their lives, they felt its miraculous presence from close. The three commanders widened their eyes as they looked around in awe. The golden energy enveloped the giant corpse for a few seconds before vanishing.

Once it disappeared, what remained was a normal corpse, devoid of any intimidating remnants of death energy. The people were shocked by the sensation they had felt from the golden energy, but before they could react further, the mysterious swordsman had already vanished.

The three commanders were left speechless. They hadn't been able to sense anything when Aldrian appeared—and now, he had disappeared just as silently! To make matters even more unbelievable, when the golden energy had blanketed the corpse,

they had sensed that the mysterious swordsman's cultivation level was only at the low Marquess stage!

How is that possible?! This was the moment when many people saw the mysterious swordsman up close, felt his presence, and sensed his cultivation—but he was only at the Marquess stage! How could he have achieved all of his feats in the past while still at the Marquess stage?! This was the question on many minds in that place.

While they were still shocked by the sudden revelation of the mysterious swordsman's true cultivation level, another commotion suddenly arose elsewhere, drawing their attention. Not far from the destroyed area, there was a vast plaza where many people were looking in one direction, watching as a platform appeared out of nowhere. The appearance of the platform was truly shocking, as if it had just teleported into this place.

On top of the platform, they saw two figures shackled by their arms and legs, kneeling in position. When the people focused their gaze on the shackled figures, they were stunned to discover that the figures were actually Grand Duke Larson and his son, Young Master Clark!

This caused an uproar, and some of the people tried to step onto the platform to attack them. However, they were blocked by a spatial shield preventing them from advancing. Realizing that the platform was protected by a kind of formation, the people could only watch the two figures that once nobles with angry expressions.

They were traitors, deserving of a death sentence!

Not long after, the people saw a group of robed figures walk to the top of the platform, unobstructed by the spatial shield. All of them were wearing masks, so the masses could not see their faces, but many thought that these people were the ones who had attacked the Larson family.

One of the masked robed figures finally took off her mask, revealing the beautiful face behind it, causing the people to gasp. They recognized that face, even though it had been more than 10 years since the incident with the Duclan family. It was the face they had once considered a disgrace because of her family's connection to the devils.

However, recently, when the Larson family's connection to the devils came to light, many people started to doubt the past events. What really happened to the Duclan family?

Carol looked at the people staring at her in bewilderment, and she realized that all the attention of the masses was focused on her. She finally began to speak.

"The people of Larson City, the people of the Vindas Empire, I'm sure you all know who I am. This face, which you once considered a disgrace in the past—just as disgraceful as the name of the Duclan family that you all once believed to be tainted."

"You all who believe everything you've heard from the Larson family are truly like shepherded sheep, with the Larson family as the shepherd." Hearing that, many people gritted their teeth in anger, but they could not refute her because what Carol said was true. They didn't know the true nature of the Larson family, and the Larsons had continued on as if they were noble, with upright morals.

"However, I'm not blaming any of you, because I, too, was fooled by them at first. When I realized the truth, it was already too late for the Duclan family," she said, sweeping her gaze over the people below.

"Now that the true criminals of the empire are kneeling before you, what punishment do they deserve?!" Carol shouted.

"Death!"

"Death!"

"Death!"

Many began to shout, their voices growing louder. Carol let them continue shouting for a few moments before she spoke again.

"Yes! Death is the only way for them! To cleanse the dirt of the empire, to erase the stain of this city caused by the devils! For all the souls wronged by them!" she shouted, drawing her sword from her waist and positioning herself beside Grand Duke Larson. Her sword was poised above his neck as Carol took her stance, ready to execute him.

Grand Duke Larson, who hadn't moved his head even once since earlier, suddenly shifted his eyes to the side to look at Carol's face, which held a cold stare directed at him. He gave a slight smile in response.

"Don't think that—"

Swish!

A sweep of the sword passed across his neck.

Chapter 338: What Will You Do?

Once the swords passed through his neck, the head of the former leader of the Larson Grand Duchy rolled onto the platform, blood flowing from the severed wound.

Clark, who had remained motionless until now, finally showed some expression as his eyes trembled at the sight of his father's head.

He then turned to look at Carol as she approached and took her place beside him. His focus was solely on her, and the sounds of his surroundings became nothing more than muffled noise.

It finally dawned on him—he was next.

"Carol, f-forgive me. I'm really sorry, but I truly couldn't do anything at that time," Clark pleaded, his eyes searching Carol's face for mercy.

However, all he saw was a cold, unyielding expression—void of even the slightest compassion.

Without hesitation, she raised her sword high above her head, ready to strike.

"No, no, Carol! Listen to me—"

Swiish!

With a swift motion, the blade sliced through Clark's neck. His head rolled onto the platform, stopping not far from the severed head of Grand Duke Larson. Even in death, Clark's face remained frozen in panic, his lips slightly parted, as if still trying to plead with his executioner.

"Uwoo!!!" The crowd roared, raising their fists in the air as they witnessed the execution. The criminals were finally dead, and the truth had been revealed.

Carol picked up the severed heads and raised them high for everyone to see.

"This is the fate of those who conspire with devils and betray the empire!" she declared.

"Yes!" the crowd shouted in unison.

From afar, the troops of the imperial family watched the execution without interfering. They had already been ordered to keep their hands off the Duclan family and allow them to do as they pleased in their pursuit of revenge.

However, there was another reason they refrained from intervening—the appearance of the mysterious swordsman.

They suspect that he had some connection to the Duclan family, as he appeared at the same time they did. Had this all been planned beforehand? They did not know.

It was safer to simply watch the events unfold.

"So, is this the sign that the Duclan family is making a comeback?" Commander Viktor said as he watched Carol display the severed heads to the crowd.

"Yes, I think so," Commander Shang replied, his expression filled with concern. "But I wonder if they also hold a grudge against the imperial family. After all, it was the princess's judgment that led to the Duclan family's execution."

"I hope they know when to stop," Viktor said. "If the bloodshed extends further to the imperial family, it won't be something they can control."

"Well, that's true. However, we still have to consider another factor—for example, the mysterious swordsman. What if he decides to help the Duclans? That would be truly terrifying, don't you think?" Commander Shang said.

Silence fell over them.

The presence of the mysterious swordsman was a serious deterrent. Having seen him up close, they knew just how extraordinary he was. If he truly had a connection to the Duclan family, it would be disastrous for the imperial family.

A man strong enough to face an entire troop of imperial soldiers was not someone they wanted to recklessly challenge.

Without anyone noticing, Aldrian and Sylphia watched the scene unfold from the rooftop of a nearby building.

Aldrian nodded in satisfaction. With this execution, his business in the city was essentially complete. The only matters left were the resolution between the imperial family and the Duclan family—and his meeting with his father and Grand Duke Flamecrest.

Just as he was thinking about the imperial family, Aldrian noticed a group approaching from one side of the plaza. They were coming from the direction of the teleportation station, and judging by their attire, it was clear they were representatives of the imperial family.

Leading the group was a messenger dressed in imperial robes, a scroll secured at his side.

As he walked toward the platform and stopped a short distance from it, the messenger unrolled the scroll he carried and began to read its contents aloud for all to hear.

"The emperor's decree has arrived!" he proclaimed.

At his words, the crowd immediately dropped to their knees in respect. However, Carol and the members of the Duclan family remained standing, their gazes fixed on the envoy.

Ignoring their defiance, the messenger continued reading.

"For the great deed of the Duclan family in uncovering the Larson family's plot against the empire, and to compensate for all they have endured, His Majesty, the Emperor, has made a decision. He will reinstate their noble status and elevate the Duclan family's rank to that of a Grand Duchy. They will be granted their former Duclan territory, along with the Larson territory. Additionally, the Emperor will present them with 50,000 peak energy stones as a gift for their return to the empire as a great noble family."

"His Majesty also expresses the imperial family's regret as a whole, for the Duclan family has suffered greatly as a result of the imperial family's negligence. As such, His Majesty is inviting the young miss of the Duclan family, Carol Duclan, to visit the imperial palace and receive compensation for the imperial family's wrong judgment."

Afterward, the messenger rolled up the scroll and turned to Carol.

"Your Excellency, I hope you will come to the imperial palace, as His Majesty truly wishes to meet with you," he said, slightly bowing his head before turning to leave with his group.

Carol still felt that her revenge was incomplete without the princess being publicly humiliated and punished. However, she remembered what Aldrian had told her and exhaled, trying to calm herself. She made an effort to look at the bright side. At least this imperial decree acknowledged that the imperial family had a hand in the fall of the Duclan family and hadn't completely washed their hands of it.

Carol gazed at the sky, her eyes seemingly filled with visions of the many figures from her past family.

"Father, mother, brother, I've avenged you all. I hope you're at peace wherever you are," she thought to herself.

She truly felt a huge burden lift from her heart. Her eyes reddened, tears threatening to fall, but she held them back. She turned to look at the members of her family behind her.

"Let's go. We're going home. Let's rebuild our home, our original home."

Since the emperor had already returned their territory, they would return to the place they had once called home—the place filled with so many memories, and where they had left their hearts.

"This can be said to be a good ending for them, right?" Sylphia asked beside Aldrian.

"Well, yes. Their revenge has been achieved, and they will return to their territory. Though it's unfortunate that they had to experience all of that, at least they got what they deserved after everything they've been through."

"It's truly commendable that the emperor is willing to admit the imperial family's fault and offer compensation for it. I truly feel sorry for him, considering what Princess Loraine has done. He can only try to repair what the princess has destroyed, but it's come at the cost of the imperial family's dignity," Sylphia said, her gaze following Carol and the Duclan family members as they walked further toward the teleportation station.

"Even though the princess did all of that, in the end, Emperor Herman couldn't bring himself to end her life. He is the example of how a father's love for his child knows no bounds," Sylphia said, her mind wandering to her own father, who had always spoiled her as his only daughter.

She smiled softly as she remembered her father, whom she hadn't seen in over two years—the longest time apart in her life. She then turned her gaze to Aldrian's face.

"My dear, if I were to do something wrong, would you have the heart to punish me?" she asked.

Aldrian fell silent, turning his head to meet Sylphia's gaze. There was no joking in her eyes; she asked with genuine curiosity.

"I don't know—"

"If I do something wrong, please punish me! I don't want to burden your morals or your dao heart. If you believe I deserve punishment, then punish me according to the laws you deem fair." Sylphia bit her lip.

"Even if it means—" Before Sylphia could finish her words, Aldrian suddenly hugged her, as if he didn't want those words to leave her mouth.

"No, I won't let you say that, and no, I won't let you make a mistake that would require punishment. I will keep watch over you so you don't make any mistakes," he said, gently stroking her hair.

Hearing that, Sylphia smiled and snuggled into his embrace.

"Truly, what an overbearing man," she thought. "But I love it."

They continued to hug each other, but then Aldrian's voice broke the silence.

"Then what if I'm the one who makes a mistake? What will you do to me?"

Sylphia lifted her head to look into Aldrian's eyes, then smiled and shook her head.

"No way you would make a severe mistake."

Aldrian tilted his head in curiosity.

"Why not?"

"I don't know, it's just a feeling, but I know you'll stand by your principles and won't sway from them to do something horrible."

"You're that confident in me?"

"Of course. I'm your woman. At least I have to be confident in my man's strong beliefs," she said proudly, making Aldrian hurriedly kiss her lips greedily. Sylphia reciprocated, and they kissed each other passionately. After more than a minute, Aldrian hugged Sylphia again before teleporting them near the inn where they were staying.

However, as they were about to enter the inn, Aldrian sensed familiar presences.

"Father and Grand Duke Flamecrest!"

Chapter 339: Conversation with Grandfather Flamecrest

Aldrian sensed that his father was sitting at the same table as his grandfather, along with Xin Haotian and Arthur. He had already informed his father of his location in Larson City, but he had not expected him to come today—let alone bring Grand Duke Flamecrest.

They each maintained their own cover so that people would not recognize them. At this moment, four individuals with renowned titles were gathered inside the inn, a situation that could easily attract attention and cause an uproar.

"Dear, my father and Grand Duke Flamecrest are inside, and I think they've already met with Xin Haotian and Arthur," Aldrian sent a voice transmission to Sylphia.

Sylphia was stunned upon hearing this, and her heart suddenly became erratic. His father and grandfather were here?

"You don't have to panic. My father already knows about our relationship and supports us. As for the Grand Duke, he doesn't even know about me, let alone you. So relax and just act natural," he said with a smile as he walked toward the table.

As Aldrian approached the table, he could clearly see an invisible soundproof shield surrounding it, ensuring that their conversation could not be heard, even by those at the nearest tables.

Aldrey noticed Aldrian approaching and signaled to Grand Duke Flamecrest that he had arrived. The grand duke turned his head toward Aldrian and was momentarily stunned upon seeing his appearance—something that always happened when people saw him for the first time.

Aldrian gave the grand duke a small smile as he finally stepped inside the soundproof shield, which seemed to have been created by the grand duke himself.

"It's truly surprising to meet Grand Duke Flamecrest and Young Master Aldrey here," Aldrian said.

"Pfft." A sudden sound came from Xin Haotian, but when Aldrey and Grand Duke Flamecrest looked at him, they saw only his usual calm expression. However, Aldrian knew that Xin Haotian had almost let out a chuckle.

Grand Duke Flamecrest stood up and extended his hand for a handshake.

"My apologies for coming here unannounced. I happened to have some spare time, and it would have been a waste not to take advantage of it to meet our benefactor," he said as Aldrian took his hand in a handshake.

After that, Aldrian and Sylphia sat in the vacant seats that Aldrian had taken from another table. As soon as they sat down, Aldrian suddenly received a voice transmission from Xin Haotian.

"How dare you call your father 'Young Master Aldrey' and your grandfather by his title? You are truly an unfilial child. Bad Aldrian."

Aldrian's eyes twitched slightly, but he ignored Xin Haotian and maintained his slight smile toward his father and Grand Duke Flamecrest.

As for the grand duke himself, he still couldn't hide his amazement while looking at Aldrian. Like many who saw him for the first time, he found it hard to believe that Aldrian was so young, yet already a legend admired by many.

Aldrey kept his expression as natural as possible, but inwardly, he was quite nervous. His son—the one he had with Irene in their hidden relationship—was sitting right in front of his father.

"When Aldrey said he would meet you, I couldn't help but come along. I wanted to see for myself the person whose achievements are heard across the continent and who always causes an uproar wherever he goes," Grand Duke Flamecrest said.

"The hearsay can sometimes be exaggerated, and all of my achievements just happen to be tied to matters involving the devils. I'm simply doing my part as a good cultivator to face them," Aldrian replied.

"Ahahaha, you are too humble. Every good cultivator must face the devils as their enemies, but only a few achieve what you have," the grand duke said and then glancing at Xin Haotian and Arthur.

"I also feel left behind, knowing that the Sword Saint and the leader of the Paladins were already acquainted with you. It's truly unexpected," he added, turning his gaze back to Aldrian.

"Anyway, another reason I came here is that I wanted to personally thank you for your help in our family's recent case. Although I don't know why you chose to assist us, our family has greatly benefited from your achievements at Boraz Fortress and the information you provided. Thanks to you, we were able to cripple the devils' operations within this empire and raise our position."

"That is good to hear, Your Excellency. I'm glad it helped the Flamecrest family as a whole," Aldrian answered.

"Young Master Aldrian, I'm really—"

"Pfft." Once again, a sound came from Xin Haotian, but when they looked at his face, they could only see his serene expression. Seeing that Xin Haotian remained silent and did not express anything, the grand duke continued.

"Young Master Aldrian, I'm really curious. Why are you helping us? I truly appreciate your assistance, but why did you do all of that, even bringing our name into the fall of Boraz Fortress? Why did you choose us? If my question is offensive, I offer my apologies, but don't you think I need to know your reasons for helping us?"

Aldrian nodded. He understood the grand duke's concern, but before he could reply, another voice transmission from Xin Haotian came.

"'Young Master Aldrian', why must your grandfather use honorifics when addressing his grandson? Do the younger generations these days not know how to show respect for—" Before Xin Haotian could finish his words, he suddenly disappeared from his seat.

The grand duke, Aldrey, and Arthur were stunned by the sudden disappearance of Xin Haotian. However, seeing that Aldrian seemed unfazed, they chose not to ask about it.

"My reason for choosing the Flamecrest family is actually not very complex. It's because I have some connection with a member of the Flamecrest family. Even though many don't know it, I have a very deep connection with your family," Aldrian said.

The grand duke was stunned, but then he narrowed his eyes and looked at Aldrey suspiciously. Aldrey, meanwhile, sweated inwardly, glancing nervously at Aldrian.

"Son, what are you doing?!" Aldrey thought to himself.

Of course, with Aldrian saying something like that, the first person Grand Duke Flamecrest would suspect was his own son, Aldrey. He was the only person who had communicated with the mysterious swordsman from their family and acted as a bridge between them.

Aldrian just smiled, watching his father's predicament, but he only left a clue for his grandfather. This was for the future so that his grandfather wouldn't be too shocked when the truth eventually came out.

"Is that so? Then is my son the member you have a close relationship with?" Grand Duke Flamecrest asked.

"He is one of them, but I have to say that he is the closest one to me."

"Son?!" Aldrey shouted inside his mind as he tried to give Aldrian a sign with his expression not to go too far in giving his father clues. Still, Aldrian ignored Aldrey and continued to smile innocently.

Sylphia, who was watching Aldrian and his father, could only giggle inwardly at Aldrian's wordplay. She could only imagine how Grand Duke Flamecrest would react when the truth about Aldrian eventually came out.

"I see. It looks like my son here is really hiding something from me," the grand duke said.

"It looks like I need to talk to Aldrey after all of this," he thought to himself.

"Anyway, Your Excellency, after all of this, the position of the Flamecrest family will be stronger, and I dare say that even the Flamecrest family's popularity will surpass that of the imperial family. Moreover, after the news about the Duclan family and the truth behind their fall spreads across the empire, the imperial family's reputation will be affected," Aldrian said.

"Yes, and I'm actually quite worried that if we become too popular, we might attract unnecessary attention from others, including the imperial family. We attacked the Larson family without informing the imperial family first, so we've already offended them. They might bring it up in the future to suppress our family. As the saying goes, the taller the tree, the stronger the wind blows."

"Well, I have no doubt it will attract attention, Your Excellency, but as for the imperial family, I can assure you that they won't make things difficult for you or the Flamecrest family," Aldrian said.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because I just met His Majesty and talked to him about it. They understand the Flamecrest family's movements and won't cause trouble for you in the future. In fact, the imperial family will reward you, Your Excellency, for the quick actions of the Flamecrest family," Aldrian said with a smile.

Aldrey and Grand Duke Flamecrest slightly widened their eyes. He met with the emperor? This was truly unexpected. If that's the case, it's safe to say that the imperial family knows Aldrian is the mysterious swordsman.

However, Grand Duke Flamecrest felt something strange about what Aldrian had said. He couldn't quite put his finger on it, but he felt that Aldrian's words held a deeper, more subtle meaning.

"I see. That's good to hear," he said.

They then fell silent for a moment before Aldrian broke the silence.

"Your Excellency, now that you've come here and I've had the chance to meet you, I actually have a favor to ask of you personally."

Hearing that, Grand Duke Flamecrest's eyes brightened. He was still confused about how to repay Aldrian's kindness, but if Aldrian wanted a favor, he would, of course, do so.

"What is it, Young Master? I will gladly do anything as long as it's within my ability."

"Oh, it's nothing grand, Your Excellency. What I ask is that, in the future, if Young Master Aldrey does something that you consider wrong, please don't get angry immediately. Give him a chance to explain himself and try not to jump to conclusions too quickly."

Grand Duke Flamecrest was stunned and felt truly confused. What kind of favor was this? Was Aldrey's relationship with Aldrian really close enough for him to ask something like that? He narrowed his eyes and glanced at Aldrey again.

Aldrey, on the other hand, was already sweating and forcing a rigid smile.

"*Why drag me into this?*" he thought.

Chapter 340: Another Figure Join Conversation

Although Aldrey felt that Aldrian had put a target on his back for his father to shoot, he understood why Aldrian had made such a request. Warmth filled his heart, knowing that his son was also thinking about their future—when their family would finally learn the truth. At that time, it would cause great disturbances and chaos, affecting even the two empires.

He had already heard from Aldrian that a few people were aware of his origin, including members of the imperial family of the Doria Empire. He felt truly grateful to Aldrian for paving the way for their future, ensuring they would not face severe backlash when the truth came to light.

"Young Master Aldrian, it's truly an honor that you're thinking of me, but I believe the Grand Duke would not act unreasonably. Isn't that right, Father?" Aldrey said, his eye twitching. Calling his own son 'Young Master' made him cringe so hard that he wanted to bury himself.

Still, he took advantage of Aldrian's request to subtly insist that the Grand Duke would also support him in the future.

Hearing his father, Aldrian also felt extremely uncomfortable, but there was nothing he could do about it. It was still too soon to reveal to Grand Duke Flamecrest that he was his grandson. If news spread that he was the son of both the Flamecrest and Rivas families, he could already imagine the headache it would cause. He would likely have to stay in this empire even longer just to ensure the situation didn't spiral out of control.

He still had his own business to take care of in another territory, and he preferred to avoid any trouble he could.

Grand Duke Flamecrest's eye twitched at Aldrey's question. If he refused to answer, it would seem as if he didn't appreciate Aldrian's request and was disrespecting him. He didn't fully understand the true meaning behind Aldrian's request, but the most important thing right now was to agree to it. The request wasn't difficult anyway, and even if Aldrian hadn't made it, he would have always supported his son.

"Of course, I never do anything that doesn't benefit you," Grand Duke Flamecrest said, glancing at Aldrey before turning his gaze back to Aldrian. "And in the future, I will do even more to support Aldrey. He is my successor, after all."

Aldrian smiled and nodded.

"Good. Your Excellency, I hope you will keep your word when the time comes."

The Grand Duke narrowed his eyes, intending to ask Aldrian what he meant, but before he could speak, Aldrian cut him off.

"Anyway, did Your Excellency come here with someone else? Because that guy over there keeps glancing in this direction from time to time, and he seems to be acquainted with you." Aldrian said, pointing toward a table not far from them.

Grand Duke Flamecrest and Aldrey exchanged confused looks before turning their heads toward the table Aldrian had pointed at. There, they saw a person in a white robe, pretending to read a book while using it to hide their face.

The Grand Duke narrowed his eyes, sensing a familiarity with the figure. A moment later, without warning, he suddenly vanished and reappeared beside them.

The figure, unprepared for the Grand Duke's sudden burst of speed, instinctively tried to escape. However, before they could react, the Grand Duke had already snatched the book away, revealing the face hidden behind it.

The moment he saw the person's face, he was stunned—it was someone he knew. He swiftly grabbing the figure by the nape and using his incredible speed to return to his seat.

The onlookers who had witnessed the Grand Duke's movements didn't even have the chance to see his or the figure's face before they were already seated at their table once again.

Aldrey, now able to see the figure's face, was also shocked—he hadn't expected to see this person here.

"Luis? What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be at the Heavenly Path Academy right now?" Aldrey asked in disbelief.

He then turned to Aldrian.

"This is Luis, my younger brother. He spends most of his time at the Heavenly Path Academy as a practical instructor, which is why he's rarely seen at our mansion or the Grand Duchy."

Aldrian raised an eyebrow—so this person was his uncle. His father had never mentioned having a younger brother, so he had never known about him. He had also never heard his uncle's name mentioned during his time at the Flamecrest Duchy, but it seemed that because Luis spent most of his time away from the Grand Duchy, his name was rarely brought up.

Earlier, Aldrian had only sensed that this person was acting suspiciously, frequently glancing in their direction. When he checked the information on him, he discovered that the man bore the name *Flamecrest*

, leading him to believe he must be someone known to either his father or Grand Duke Flamecrest.

Luis, now dragged to the table by his father, could only manage a stiff smile before answering.

"Well, because of what happened in Larson City, the Heavenly Path Academy also sent a group of cultivators to investigate the situation here. The headmaster wants to know about 'him' because, as you know, the academy doesn't want to miss out on the news

about the mysterious swordsman being here. Like everyone else, they want to see him and maybe establish a connection."

"So, you're here with your group from the academy?" Grand Duke Flamecrest asked.

"Yes, and I arrived earlier to book rooms because this inn is the best in the city. But coincidentally, I saw Father and Elder Brother come in, so I wanted to find out what you two were up to." Luis answered, then glanced at Arthur, who wasn't using any disguise technique, but was merely covering his features with a robe.

"But I don't think I've seen the leader of the Paladins from the Heavenly Direction Church here. This is truly unexpected. I thought everyone here, including the one who disappeared, was an important figure, and that Father and Elder Brother must have something important to discuss. I was simply curious to know what it was."

His gaze then shifted to Aldrian, filled with curiosity about his identity. Since he was outside the soundproof shield, he hadn't heard any of the conversation, but from his perspective, his father and elder brother seemed to show more respect to this young man than to anyone else.

"Ah, Second Young Master, it's nice to see you," Aldrian said with a smile. "It's our first time meeting, but I've known about your family for a long time."

"Ah yes, it's a pleasure to meet you, sir—"

"Aldrian, just call me Aldrian."

"Ah, Sir Aldrian," Luis replied, but then he sent a voice transmission to Aldrey.

"Brother, who is this person? Why do you and Father show him so much respect?"

"He's our benefactor. He has helped our family, but you know his title—he's the one many call the mysterious swordsman," Aldrey answered.

Hearing that, Luis's eyes widened in shock as he turned his head toward Aldrian and observed him once again. This young man was the mysterious swordsman? The one everyone had been searching for? Luis was truly stunned, as there was nothing about him that indicated he could be the legendary swordsman! His age seemed far too young for someone to be called a swordmaster!

Suddenly, Luis stood up and bowed deeply toward Aldrian.

"Young Mas—I mean, Your Excellency, I truly admire you for all your achievements and your strength. Every time you appear and cause an uproar with your sword, it inspires many of our students and teachers alike at the academy. When you unleashed your sword intent and sword will, it even affected the entire continent. It's a phenomenon that

has been engraved in our minds. Personally, I've always wanted to meet you and learn one or two things from you."

The sudden act of his uncle truly stunned Aldrian, and it also drew the attention of those around them. While the surrounding people couldn't hear what Aldrian's group was discussing, they couldn't help but notice the unusual behavior.

Aldrian quickly realized this and created a blur effect to shield their figures, making sure the people couldn't focus on their faces.

The Grand Duke appreciated Aldrian's quick thinking.

"Second Young Master, you don't have to exaggerate like that, but I appreciate your admiration. Please, there's no need to keep bowing. I feel uncomfortable if you keep bowing like that," Aldrian said.

Luis straightened his posture and sat down again. His gaze toward Aldrian was now full of admiration and respect.

"Your Excellency, your swordsmanship is truly remarkable, even our headmaster admires it. The sword you wield, one that affects the entire continent, is something never before heard of, at least not in the recorded history of the continent. That kind of strength must come from an extraordinary level of comprehension and power in your sword will—something even our headmaster has yet to reach. He wishes to invite you to the academy to ask for a tip or two."

"The headmaster of the Heavenly Path Academy?" Aldrian asked.

"Yes, Your Excellency, our headmaster is one of the ten great swordsmasters of the continent. He holds the title of the Sword Sage of the Heavenly Path, Wang Weijian," Luis replied.

"I see. To be honest, I'm really curious about the Heavenly Path Academy, which is said to be the best cultivation academy on the continent. In the future, if I have time, I will surely visit it," Aldrian said.

Luis's eyes brightened, and he instantly lowered his head.

"Thank you, Your Excellency."

Aldrey, hearing his son and little brother's conversation, could only laugh inwardly. He wondered what his little brother's expression would be in the future when he discovered that the person he kept calling "Your Excellency" was, in fact, his own nephew.