

# **The Shining Star Above The Heaven #Chapter 471: Wilmar's Attempt - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 471: Wilmar's Attempt**

## **Chapter 471: Wilmar's Attempt**

Wilmar sat inside a restaurant located closest to the mayor's mansion. He took a seat by the window, which gave him a clear view in the direction of the mansion.

The restaurant stood right beside the main road connecting his current district to the mansion's area.

He was already wearing a different robe and a mask to cover his face. He had received both after asking a guard in town to provide them before he entered Catiras. He knew his usual white robe was far too conspicuous and would continue to draw unwanted attention. He couldn't afford to underestimate Catiras, it was Aldrian's main base.

He also worried someone might recognize him and spread the word, so he chose to wear a mask. It wasn't too unusual anyway, as many others sometimes wore masks in the city to conceal their identities.

He kept looking at the road that passed through a small forest leading to the estate. From his position, he could see a few people exiting the area. He recognized them as the mansion's maids, likely heading out to purchase supplies.

He had been there for more than half an hour and had already gathered some information about the mansion's daily activity from nearby residents. Now, he was just waiting for an opening, an opportunity to infiltrate the mansion.

His plan was simple.

Infiltrate the mansion and take a hostage to use as a bargaining chip for his escape. He would bring the hostage with him wherever he went, and even if Aldrian caught him, he could use the hostage as leverage.

That was the only plan he could come up with to escape his situation. Aldrian was too powerful—he needed something to keep him in check.

Unbeknownst to him, a food stall owner outside the restaurant kept glancing in his direction. His actions were natural, not raising any suspicion. He was one of the people Wilmar had approached earlier to gather information about the mansion's activity, and Wilmar had paid him with a few energy stones.

After a brief glance at Wilmar, the stall owner sent a voice transmission to someone.

*"He's still there, watching the mansion. I can still sense a faint killing intent from him. That man is a threat."*

After sending the message, he calmly resumed his work. Not long after, another man approached the stall and placed an order.

*"That man, sir, behind the window of Family's Taste Restaurant, wearing a brown robe that covers his head. Although he tries to keep his aura in check, I sensed a brief flicker of low emperor-stage energy from him."* The stall owner sent another voice transmission, this time contacting the man who had ordered food.

The man who bought the food glanced at Wilmar for a split second before sitting at an empty table that the stall owner had prepared for him. In fact, he was actually First Finger in disguise. He went about his daily routine, appearing as a commoner, but in truth, he was acting as eyes and ears for Arson Vuran.

He and the other members of the Thunderous Shadow Pavilion had moved their entire operation here. Under Aldrian's command, they now served as guardians of the city. Their role had evolved beyond that of mere assassins—they acted as a secret group working in the shadows to keep the city in order.

That was why they had already built an extensive information network in the city, ensuring that nothing suspicious went unnoticed and that everything remained in order.

The only event they failed to counter was the gu outbreak. They had no knowledge of its source or how it had managed to enter the city, which infuriated Arson. To make matters worse, they had to rely on Aldrian, their true master, to act on his own, outing them in shame.

The stall owner then handed the ordered food to First Finger, but his gaze lingered on the robed figure from time to time.

*"Why do I sense something familiar about him?"* he thought to himself.

He didn't take any action against the robed figure because he wanted to see what the figure would do and why he harbored killing intent. Was this man here for Aldrian? However, the familiar feeling he got from the robed figure made him question the man's identity.

He continued to eat, waiting for another hour, until finally, he saw the robed man move in the direction of the mansion along the main road. He appeared to be approaching the four carriages bringing supplies to the mansion.

However, First Finger's eyebrows slightly raised when he noticed something he hadn't missed while the robed figure walked. It was the man's shoes, which were special footwear that only the imperial family wore.

Alarm bells went off in his mind, and he quickly retrieved a communication artifact.

"We have an unknown person from the imperial family. Although he covered himself with a robe and mask, I saw the imperial family's shoes he was wearing. He also seems to have bad intentions toward master, as he appears to want to enter the mansion's area." He waited for a response from the other side, but there was no answer. After a few seconds, a voice finally resounded—it was Arson Vuran's voice.

"That is Prince Wilmar," came the reply.

Hearing the response, First Finger widened his eyes. "How...?"

"There is no one from the imperial family who can move here unless it's Prince Wilmar. We don't know what happened in the capital, but it looks like whatever master did there forced him to come to Caritas."

"From your description, it seems he intends to infiltrate the mansion and target master's group. Where is he right now?"

"He is on the main road, and right now he's trying to sneak in behind the supply carriages toward the mansion. It seems he wants to take advantage of the carriages to enter," First Finger replied.

"Good. Let him in. We'll catch him after he enters the inner area." With that, the connection was cut off.

First Finger watched as Wilmar slipped into the last carriage without anyone noticing, then saw the carriages continue their journey toward the mansion.

Finally, First Finger left the table and began walking, following the carriages at a distance.

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Inside the last carriage, Wilmar sat, concealed behind the cover of the supplies. Fortunately, his infiltration had faced no hindrances.

"Good thing there's no tight security for entering the mansion's area," he thought.

He waited for more than 15 minutes before finally feeling the carriage come to a stop. Sensing that he had arrived, he tried to peek between the cover of the carriage to see if he had entered the mansion area.

However, what he saw stunned him. He was in the middle of a desolate field like a training ground. It was then that he sensed something was wrong. His danger sense

kicked in as he felt a sudden presence above the carriage. Before he could react, something broke through the roof and attacked him from above.

Wilmar, with his speed and agility, instantly dodged by leaping outside of the carriage, landing in the open area. He gritted his teeth in frustration. He hadn't sensed the person until they decided to strike, which meant their stealth technique was advanced. This person was an assassin.

Wilmar saw the black-robed assassin, and from what he sensed, this man was a low emperor stage cultivator, like himself. He realized that his plan had already failed, his infiltration compromised by this figure.

Then, the figure vanished again without a trace, as if he had simply disappeared from the spot where he stood.

Wilmar's senses heightened as he grew wary of his surroundings. Suddenly, he detected another threat behind him. Without hesitation, he used his movement technique to dodge, but he immediately felt something strike his gut, sending him flying through the air.

Wilmar rolled several times before managing to steady himself and stand. He turned to face the attacker, his eyes widening in shock. He immediately recognized the person, as the attacker hadn't bothered to conceal his face like most assassins, allowing Wilmar to see his face clearly.

"Arson!" Wilmar exclaimed, his voice filled with shock.

"Your High—no, Wilmar, it's been a long time," Arson replied calmly.

"You're truly impressive, to have sensed First Finger's attack. I applaud you for it."

Seeing that Arson wasn't afraid of him and Arson was in this place, something finally clicked inside Wilmar's mind. He suddenly began giggling, then threw his head back and covered his face with his hand, laughing uncontrollably.

Arson Vuran didn't mind Wilmar's behavior. It was clear that Wilmar had finally figured out the truth, but it no longer mattered.

"I see, I see. To think that you and the entire Thunderous Shadow Pavilion have been hiding here. To think you've become a dog for Aldrian... no wonder you kept your distance from me and avoided the civil war. I've truly been fooled," Wilmar said after his laughter subsided.

At that moment, all the strangeness he had sensed from this group of assassins became clear. To think that they had been working with Aldrian all along—and it

seemed they had known each other for a long time, with Arson even guarding this place.

Arson Vuran showed no change in expression as he watched the prince break down.

"Whatever your plan is, you will fail. Give it up. Resisting will only bring more pain," he said.

Hearing this, Wilmar's face turned fierce.

"Not a chance!"

Suddenly, he pulled out a ball-shaped object and threw it toward Arson.

Boom!

## **Chapter 472: Caught Them**

Boom!

The ball exploded right in front of Arson's face. It was actually filled with explosive powder, strong enough to injure an unprepared cultivator.

However, Wilmar didn't wait to see the result. He immediately dashed toward the forest surrounding the mansion area, not hesitating for a second as he decided to use his final escape method.

He pulled out a small box-shaped artifact from his storage ring and was about to activate it, but before he could, a figure suddenly appeared beside him and struck at the hand holding the artifact with a dagger.

Tring!

Wilmar instinctively used the box to block the attack and kicked at the assailant, but the attacker dodged with agile movements.

Before he could catch his breath, another figure appeared from his other side and struck at his leg, aiming to disable him.

He leapt to avoid the blow—but the moment he rose, a heavy punch landed squarely on his head as another figure appeared right in front of him.

"Akh!" Wilmar grimaced as he felt his nose break. His body was flung through the air, rolling across the ground several times before he could steady himself.

But just as he prepared to use a technique to escape, another figure appeared behind him, grabbing his arm and neck in a tight hold, then slammed him hard into the ground.

The figure locked his movements, and yet another appeared to further restrain him. With swift, coordinated motions, they sealed Wilmar's cultivation.

They picked him up from the ground, and one of them drove a punch into his gut.

"Ack!" Saliva spilled from his mouth as pain surged through his gut, nearly causing him to collapse. He tried to clutch his stomach, but both of his hands were already restrained by two assassins, and his cultivation had been sealed. He had no strength left to resist.

Once Wilmar was fully restrained, three more figures appeared at different positions, all turning their gaze toward him.

They were the Fingers of the Thunderous Shadow Pavilion. It was no surprise they had brought Wilmar down so easily with their coordinated assault.

Each one was an Emperor-stage cultivator, trained for swift, lethal strikes delivered with surgical precision.

"I told you, you'd feel pain if you didn't give up," came Arson's voice.

With a pained expression, Wilmar looked up at the approaching figure. Arson was still in perfect condition. Not a single scar or burn marked his body, despite taking a direct hit from the explosive powder. Even his robe remained untouched, still perfectly clean.

Wilmar gritted his teeth, fury flashing across his face.

"You dog! Don't think just because you've become that bastard's lackey you'll escape retribution! I'll make sure the world knows about you and your group. Let's see how long you last once your victims come for you. Neither you nor that bastard will be able to stop the storm that's coming!" he shouted, his voice sharp with rage.

Arson only shrugged.

"Well, we're an assassin group, so of course we have enemies. But don't act like you're pure while we're the only ones stained," Arson said. "When we were still working with you, we handled your dirty work and you paid us. It was business."

"If word ever gets out about your past sins, about how you used our services, do you really think the victims' families will only come for us? No, they'll come for you too."

Wilmar's eyes remained fierce, but his chest tightened. He knew Arson was right. He had used the Thunderous Shadow Pavilion many times, and there were already countless victims because he had taken advantage of their services.

His confidence finally wavered as he began searching for a way out.

"Forget about asking for mercy. You'll stay at this place until Master arrives," Arson said, his expression turning irritated. "Just remember, because you suspected us of working with the First Prince, without any evidence, you tried to eliminate us. Because of that, we had to hide for over a year."

"You truly are a snake, but oh well, I understand why you did all of that and why you felt the need to eliminate us. I don't really blame you. But that doesn't mean I'll forget the struggles we went through because you hunted us down," Arson added.

He then leaned in closer to Wilmar.

"I know you came here because Master already ruined all your plans, forcing you into this desperate move. I have to say, you've got guts for targeting his group. I can't wait to see how he'll deal with you once you meet him. Heck, I wouldn't be surprised if Master is already thinking about how to torture you."

Arson pulled his face away from Wilmar and smiled at him.

"Take him to the dungeon, and you two, guard his cell until Master arrives," Arson said before turning and walking away.

"Wait! Wait, Arson! Release me! I apologize, Arson, Arson! You'll regret keeping me here—ARSON!"

Arson Vuran didn't even glance at Wilmar as he was dragged away by the two assassins toward the dungeon. Once Wilmar's voice faded, the First Finger approached Arson.

"From how crazy he's acting, Master must have already concluded everything in the capital. His fate is basically sealed," the First Finger remarked, earning a nod from Arson.

"It looks like we'll hear news from the capital soon," he responded.

After this brief exchange, the assassins went back to their respective tasks.

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At another location, in the midst of nowhere, there was a small village. Aldrian floated just outside, observing it. The village was located within Donovan Grand Duchy, near the border of the Empire's central region, where the capital was located.

For that man to have escaped this far, the Grand Duke must have used a special escape artifact that teleports the user to a designated place.

What Aldrian saw was a typical village—nothing noteworthy. The villagers appeared to be common mortals, which left Aldrian wondering what that man had been doing in this place.

After receiving the heavens' response with the locations of Wilmar, Grand Duke Donovan, and Carlson Harris, Aldrian decided to target the Grand Duke first. Although Wilmar had recklessly come to Caritas with ill intent, Aldrian wasn't worried because there were enough powerful figures there to hold him off.

He could focus on catching the others, with the Grand Duke being his priority after Wilmar, as he was the mastermind behind the Gu outbreak.

According to the heavens, Grand Duke Donovan was in that village, inside one of the houses. True to the answer, Aldrian sensed his presence inside one of the buildings, and it seemed he was preparing for some kind of ritual. Aldrian instantly knew what he intended to do, as a summoning formation was drawn before the grand duke.

He wondered how he would activate the formation since Grand Duke Donovan was not a devil cultivator, and the formation would not work with any energy other than devil energy. However, Aldrian was not in the mood to wait, so he teleported directly in front of Grand Duke Donovan, who was pouring a set of stones into the summoning formation.

The Grand Duke, caught off guard by Aldrian's sudden appearance, was truly shocked.

Before he could react or do anything, Aldrian delivered a powerful punch to the Grand Duke's stomach, his fist imbued with golden energy. The punch caused the Grand Duke's dantian to crack severely, destabilizing the energy within it. To make matters worse, the energy began leaking, albeit at a small rate.

Aldrian's golden energy seeped into the Grand Duke's body, instantly blocking the flow of energy from his dantian. Without hesitation, Aldrian grabbed the Grand Duke by the neck and slammed him into the ground, causing a small crater and the wooden house to collapse instantly.

The surrounding villagers were stunned by the sudden commotion coming from one of the houses and shocked to see that the wooden house had collapsed. Many of them began to gather around the house, wondering what had happened.



The only thing they knew about this particular house was that it belonged to someone from the big city, but the owner never seemed to stay there.

When the villagers arrived to check the house, all they found was dust and rubble. The only thing that stood out was a small crater, as if something had dropped there and destroyed the ground. There was also a strange red line, which appeared to form a symbol on the ground, but due to the destruction, they couldn't make out what kind of symbol it was.

They looked around but found nothing else. Some thought someone might have been inside the house doing something, but with no sign of anyone, they were left even more puzzled about what had really happened.

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Meanwhile, Aldrian was already in another place, holding the Grand Duke in his grasp as he choked him from behind by the neck. He had already moved toward the location where his next target was located.

## **Chapter 473: The End of the Civil War**

Aldrian was now in another place near the capital. It was actually one of the satellite cities directly connected to it. He looked down, watching the bustling activities of the people below and how the aftermath of his battle in the capital was affecting them. From what he could see and hear, news of what happened in the capital had already reached this place.

It was not surprising, as this city was one of the closest places to the capital.

Aldrian then ignored all of it and turned his gaze toward one of the grand buildings that stood out among the rest. It was a ten-story tower with a vast courtyard, and many people were entering and exiting through its main gates. At the entrance, a large sign displayed a name already recognized as a commercial behemoth across the empire.

Golden Swan Commerce.

It was surprising to think that Carlson Harris, the leader of Golden Swan Commerce, had escaped to this place. He was hiding in one of the organization's branch offices. Aldrian's eyes and senses, which could not be blocked by anything within his domain, detected that Carlson was inside one of the rooms. It seemed he was trying to contact someone using a communication artifact.

Aldrian smiled as he watched this, then instantly teleported beside Carlson. He grabbed him by the neck, slamming his face flat against the floor. Aldrian pressed his knee into Carlson's back to hold him in place, then applied more pressure until he heard the sickening crack of Carlson's spine breaking.

Crack!

"Akh!" Carlson cried out in agony. He hadn't expected such a sudden attack, and the pain from his shattered spine, combined with his broken nose, was intense. Blood flowed from his nose, swelling on his face. But Aldrian gave him no chance to make another sound, instantly teleporting him elsewhere.

Through all of this, Aldrian still had one hand firmly grasping Grand Duke Donovan, who remained conscious and was still kicking, desperately trying to break free from Aldrian's hold.

The moment Aldrian teleported, a few people entered the room. From their attire, it was clear they were the guards who had heard the commotion. They were stunned to find no one there, despite knowing their leader had entered the room. All they saw were traces of the broken floor and blood, which made them believe something had happened to their leader.

Panic set in, and soon, all the guards within the Golden Swan Commerce branch began spreading out across the city in search of their leader.

Unfortunately for them, their leader was no longer in the city. Aldrian had already returned to his mansion in Caritas. He teleported to the back of his mansion, where some members of the Fingers were hiding in the shadows. They were shocked by his sudden appearance, but their eyes widened in disbelief when they saw that Aldrian had brought two people with him.

They instantly recognized them as Grand Duke Donovan and Carlson Harris, the leader of Golden Swan Commerce.

Powerless against Aldrian, they writhed in his grasp, unable to do anything but be dragged toward the dungeon, which was not far from them.

"Aldrian! Young master! Don't do this! You'll regret it if you kill me now!" Carlson shouted.

"Aldrian, you will face disaster in the future. Don't think you've won just because you've defeated us," Grand Duke Donovan said in a fierce tone.

Aldrian ignored them completely, but then his steps came to a halt as the members of the Fingers appeared instantly in front of him, bowing in unison.

"Welcome back, master," they said respectfully.

Aldrian nodded. "Good job. You guys caught a rat trying to sneak in. Now, let me deal with them first."

He then continued dragging them toward the dungeon, ignoring their loud ramblings. The Fingers watched as Grand Duke Donovan and Carlson were dragged out of sight. They couldn't help but wonder what kind of fate awaited them.

They had heard the rumors and stories about Aldrian. He was like a devil when it came to dealing with his enemies. With the power he held, they couldn't help but wonder what kind of torture those poor bastards would have to endure.

Arson arrived not long after, having sensed Aldrian's sudden appearance at the back of the mansion. He wanted to greet Aldrian, but it seemed his master had already entered the dungeon, as he could faintly hear the echoed sounds of rambling from the two captives.

"Who did the master bring back with him?" Arson asked the second Finger standing beside him.

"He brought Grand Duke Donovan and Carlson Harris."

Hearing the answer, Arson was astonished. It seemed that Aldrian had swept up all the key figures from Wilmar's faction: the strategist and the logistics coordinator, the main components that had allowed Wilmar to gain the upper hand against the opposition.

With this, there was no other possible outcome than the complete fall of the second prince's faction. True to his prediction, not long after, news from the capital spread like wildfire. The civil war was over. For the first time since the conflict began, the emperor made an appearance and announced the end of the war himself.

He also declared that the second prince would face punishment for his coup and for causing the destruction of countless lives. The emperor further stated that all collaborators with the prince would be punished, including Grand Duke Donovan and the leader of Golden Swan Commerce, Carlson Harris.

Because this was a special case, where the imperial family itself had been harmed by the civil war, Emperor Raymond dared to announce the treacherous acts of Wilmar, who had collaborated with the devils. Many would now shun the prince, with little negative impact on the reputation or integrity of the other members of the imperial family.

This action served to show the people that the imperial family was determined to purge every traitor, even if they came from their own bloodline.

The emperor also announced that the mysterious swordsman, Aldrian, had given his support and was helping the imperial family and the people of the empire to restore order.

With the imperial family's decision and Aldrian's support, many people felt assured and did not mind what the imperial family would do next. They believed that justice would be enacted and that those who deserved to be hunted would face the consequences.

Although some people were skeptical about the imperial family, the name of Aldrian at least assured them that justice would be served.

The emperor's announcement caused all the forces that had aligned themselves with the second prince to cease their activities and surrender. Scenes of thousands of troops returning to their respective territories or dropping their weapons spread across many parts of the empire after the announcement.

This caused many to cheer with joy, especially those from the opposition forces—it felt like a dream to them. Just a few weeks earlier, they had believed they would surely lose the civil war and end up dead. However, as if fate had been flipped, they had suddenly survived, and the second prince's faction was disbanded.

After all of this, the name of Aldrian resounded throughout the entire empire. His name became a legend that would undoubtedly be written into the history of the Atria Empire for generations to come. With his power alone, he had stopped the civil war and prevented the wicked second prince, supported by the devils, from taking over the empire.

While the empire experienced yet another wave of change, the person whom many admired and shouted for was inside a dungeon. He stood in the room, looking at the three figures he had forced to sit in their seats.

Their seats were arranged in a triangle, allowing them to see each other clearly despite the dimness of the room. The only source of light was a candle placed above them, casting a gloomy atmosphere over the scene.

Wilmar, Grand Duke Donovan, and Carlson sat with their bodies tied to their seats, their cultivation sealed. Aldrian had used a spatial lock to keep them immobile and unable to speak. The only sound in the room was the sound of their breathing, which made the tension even more palpable.

They had been in this position for over an hour, and Aldrian seemed to be standing silently in the shadows of the room, where the light could not reach. After a few more minutes of silence, Aldrian's voice finally broke it.

"I'm still thinking about how to make the wrath in my heart subside when I look at the three of you. Many thoughts have crossed my mind, but I still can't decide which would be the best."

Aldrian's figure finally emerged from the shadows, appearing behind Wilmar. He placed a hand on his shoulder and gave it a tap. Wilmar, gripped by an overwhelming sense of fear, wanted to flinch, but he couldn't due to the spatial lock.

The other two tried to glance at Aldrian and look at his smiling face under the candlelight, which now seemed chilling and demonic, the smile that would haunt them for the rest of their lives—well, if they still had lives after this.

"But I feel stupid for considering so many torture methods and having to choose, when in fact, I can just try them all on you," Aldrian said, still smiling.

Hearing those words, Wilmar and the others felt their hearts turn cold, as though they were being swallowed by an endless abyss.

## **Chapter 474: Torture Session**

A few hours had already passed since the emperor declared the civil war over, and the empire was still swept up in festive joy. Of course, there were some who felt resentment, as the outcome of the war had not been what they predicted—but there was nothing they could do about it.

With the emperor's declaration and final decision, even though the majority of nobles had supported Wilmar, they had no choice but to stand down and lay down their arms. There was no point in continuing a war that could no longer be won, especially with Aldrian backing the imperial family. It was wiser to preserve their family's resources than to fight a battle they had no hope of winning.

However, despite all the celebration, many still had not seen Aldrian in the capital. After the battle near the capital and his entry into the imperial palace, he had not appeared again, even though many had been waiting for him.

The people of Caritas, the city where Aldrian lived and ruled, were the happiest at this moment. They had finally heard that the unnecessary war had come to an end, and that the second prince had been successfully defeated. Many had already lost too much because of this conflict, and hearing that the prince would finally receive the punishment he deserved brought peace to their hearts.

With Aldrian on their side, there was no doubt that the second prince and those who had aided him would face justice.

The city's joyful atmosphere had even reached the mansion, where the staff could be heard chatting excitedly about Aldrian. But despite the cheerful mood, confusion soon followed. Word had spread quickly throughout the estate that their lord had returned.

A few of the gardeners working behind the mansion claimed they had seen Aldrian suddenly appear at the edge of the forest in the distance, dragging two people with him.

Wasn't Aldrian still in the capital? How had he already returned to the mansion?

Near the surface entrance to the dungeon, a few of the Fingers stood guard in the shadows beneath the tall trees. The dungeon was located deep within the forest surrounding the mansion, far from the main estate, making it a secluded and remote place.

While they remained on guard, they suddenly sensed someone approaching. When they saw who it was, they realized it was Sylphia. From the way she moved, it seemed she was heading toward the dungeon—likely looking for Aldrian.

One of them stepped out from the shadows and appeared in front of her. Sylphia was briefly startled, but quickly regained her composure. She recognized the figure's robe and presence—it was one of the Fingers.

Covered in a black robe that concealed their features, the figure clearly had a woman's build. Sylphia guessed she must be one of the two women among the Fingers.

"My lady," the figure said with a slight bow.

"Are you the Fifth or the Seventh Finger?" Sylphia asked.

"The Fifth."

Sylphia gave a small nod.

"I just finished my cultivation session and came to see Aldrian. I heard he returned and walked in this direction. Do you know where he is?"

"My lady, my apologies, but it would be best if you didn't see master right now. He's busy with the captives in the dungeon. I'm afraid you might witness something... unpleasant."

Sylphia tilted her head.

"Captives? Who are they?" she asked. She had not heard the details of Aldrian's return. All she knew came from a maid's report, which had been passed along from someone else.

"Grand Duke Donovan, the leader of the Golden Swan Commerce, Carlson Harris... and the second prince. For the second prince, he attempted to infiltrate the mansion earlier today, but we managed to subdue him."

Hearing the names of the captives and realizing Aldrian had taken them to the dungeon, Sylphia knew better than to disturb him. She understood his nature all too well—

especially when it came to dealing with his enemies in a space where no one would interrupt him.

Considering who they were, men who had harmed so many and had nearly caused Eleine's death, Sylphia had no doubt about what awaited them. Aldrian would make sure they experienced a nightmare they would never forget.

"Alright, I will wait for him in the mansion," Sylphia said before turning around and heading back toward the mansion. The Fifth Finger watched her retreating figure before turning her attention toward the dungeon's gate.

Since Aldrian had brought the captives inside, there had been no sound. She was curious about what Aldrian was doing with them, but she didn't believe for a second that he was simply having a polite conversation with them.

However, she quickly pushed those thoughts aside. Such thinking wouldn't be productive for her mission. What she needed to focus on was carrying out her task dutifully.

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Under the dim light of the dungeon room, the muffled voices from clenched lips echoed throughout the space.

"Hnggmng!"

Although the sound was muffled, it was loud enough to suggest that the person was trying to shout, desperately attempting to scream but unable to move their lips. Bloodstains covered the floor, and strangely, there were several severed limbs scattered about, even though only four people occupied the room, with three of them being captives.

The one who had tried to scream just now was Wilmar, whose arms had been severed by Aldrian. He couldn't shout in pain or writhe in agony because Aldrian had used a spatial lock on him. The other two captives could only lower their heads, their expressions blank. Their faces were pale, and their features showed that they wished for death to come for them.

Hundreds of severed limbs—arms and legs—were scattered around the three captives, which seemed strange at first. But this was actually one of Aldrian's new methods of torture.

After cutting off one of Wilmar's arms, Aldrian healed it using his golden energy. Within seconds, a new arm grew where the previous one had been severed. Then Aldrian cut it off again, healed it again, and repeated the cycle over and over. He continued without pause, cutting and healing, until he eventually grew bored.



It was not just the arms. Aldrian did the same to every part of their bodies. Each time he cut them, he healed them. Every time he skinned their flesh, he restored it.

This cycle of repeated torture was one of the most horrific methods imaginable. The captives were forced to endure the same pain again and again, with no relief, as long as the torturer continued to heal them.

Many people can claim that they can withstand any kind of physical torture because they have been trained so. However that is because they never experiencing repeated torture like this that they can claim like that. At one point they will broke down because they have to experiencing the same pain that they tough already passed. They though that the pain will one time because their limbs already severed.

There were people in the past who had tried this method. But regrowing severed limbs required high-grade healing elixirs, which were expensive and too valuable to waste. Because of that, the technique was abandoned.

However, such limitations did not apply to Aldrian. He could regenerate limbs easily using his golden energy, or even combine it with life laws, to regenerate limbs in seconds—making this form of torture terrifyingly efficient.

This was also one of the things that initially shocked Wilmar and the others. They couldn't comprehend how any kind of energy could regrow limbs so quickly. What kind of witchcraft was this? They knew of advanced techniques used by skilled physicians that could help regenerate limbs, but those were extremely rare.

Even now, they could only name three people known to possess such abilities—and even then, the process required immense energy and multiple sessions to fully restore a limb.

But Aldrian? It took him no more than twenty seconds—and just like that, a new limb would grow.

Aldrian had been repeating this torture on the three men for several hours, and it had already been Wilmar's turn for over an hour. Grand Duke Donovan and Carlson were exhausted, their will to live drained. Compared to enduring the same pain again and again, they would have preferred death.

Although they had expected to be tortured, none of them had imagined Aldrian would use a method like this.

A few minutes later, after severing several more of Wilmar's limbs, Aldrian finally stopped. He let out a sigh and looked down at Wilmar. He healed the leg he had just cut and turned his gaze toward the other two.

He released the spatial lock that had frozen their movements, allowing them to move again. But none of them reacted. They simply lowered their heads, as if their minds had already died.

There was no spirit left in them. Yet, Aldrian approached and placed a hand on each of them, one by one, gently channeling his golden energy into their souls. This was meant to refresh their psychological state, preventing them from completely breaking down and helping them regain a semblance of sanity.

After a few seconds, Aldrian withdrew his golden energy from the three men, and they seemed to regain some sanity. They looked at him with trembling eyes, filled with fear. From the way they gazed at him, it was clear they believed Aldrian tortured them for his own amusement.

Since the session began, he hadn't spoken a word. They had expected him to ask for information or anything, but no—he simply continued the torture with a calm expression.

"You crazy psycho," Carlson couldn't help but blurt out.

Realizing his mistake, he quickly shut his mouth.

Aldrian glanced at Carlson, a faint smile finally curling on his lips.

"Thank you for the compliment. However, I believe it's only right for me to do this after you tried to kill me in the past."

Aldrian then approached Carlson, locking his gaze with his.

"And it's only fitting for me to do this to someone who helped the devils spread destruction across the continent."

He stopped right in front of Carlson.

"You see, I'm really curious—why did you go so far as to assist them in infiltrating so many places?"

## **Chapter 475: Talk Between the Session**

"Even if you're a merchant only driven by profit, I doubt you'd go so far as to help the devils. You must know the consequences of doing that. So I thought—this must be because of something else. They must have approached you, and you were tempted by their offer. Am I right?" Aldrian said, then turned to look at the others.

"The same goes for the rest of you. The devils must have offered something, and you accepted it. Tsk, tsk... You're all so easy to read. That's why people overwhelmed by negative emotions are easily manipulated by devils. They can use you like puppets

without you even realizing it. Even now, I believe this coup was their suggestion—wasn't it?" Aldrian asked, his eyes fixed on Wilmar.

Sensing the turbulence in Wilmar's heart, Aldrian knew he was right—and he couldn't help but smile widely. He then turned his gaze to Grand Duke Donovan.

"And you," he said, "you had a separate deal with the devils—one that Wilmar didn't know about, right? Something like... seizing power while Wilmar and I killed each other. You tried to play the oriole while the mantis hunted the cicada. But when you saw that I couldn't be defeated, you escaped and tried to stir chaos by releasing a beast through the devil's summoning formation. Am I wrong?"

Grand Duke Donovan remained silent, but his heart tightened, and a chill spread through his chest—because everything Aldrian said was true. It left him wondering how Aldrian could possibly know all of it.

Then, Aldrian suddenly took out a staff from his storage ring. The moment it rested in his grasp and became visible to the Grand Duke, he stunned.

"You must recognize this staff," Aldrian said. "I took it from the Varuga—and I found it quite interesting."

The staff in Aldrian's grasp was none other than the Devil's Curse Domain Staff, the one he had taken from the mansion where Karl Donovan had stayed in Varuga. It was a peak heaven-grade artifact with terrifying effects.

"There's no way the devils would hand over an artifact this powerful without some hidden agenda, even if it's a single-use item, I can guess it was something you planned to use on Wilmar—once the civil war was over."

Wilmar, upon hearing Aldrian's explanation and seeing the staff for himself, froze and turned to glance at Grand Duke Donovan. A deep sense of betrayal struck him, but after a few seconds, he lowered his head.

It no longer mattered whether what Aldrian said was true or not. Now that they had all been caught, there was no point in confronting the Grand Duke about it.

Grand Duke Donovan's eyes trembled. He lowered his head, unable to refute anything Aldrian had said.

"Ahahaha! See? You're all so easy to read and too easy to manipulate, even unaware that the devils have been pulling your strings this whole time. Wait, no—you might know you've been used, but don't tell me—" Aldrian slightly widened his eyes.

"Don't tell me—you actually thought you could stab the devils in the back once you were done using them?"

Still, no one spoke.

"Pfft. Ahahaha! What arrogant fools. Idiots beyond redemption. Do you really think the devils didn't consider that possibility? That beings so sensitive to negative energy and emotion would ignore your greed and fail to take precautions? Please—give me a break."

Carlson trembled slightly and lowered his head, while the Grand Duke glared at Aldrian with fierce eyes.

"You don't know anything! This continent will fall into darkness, and I'm just trying to choose the winning side! I want to survive and protect my family's legacy. You ignorant bastard, like a frog in a well, will never understand the horrors the devils will bring upon this land!"

"If we force ourselves to fight them directly without taking a step back, we'll lose everything—without even a chance to survive!" Grand Duke Donovan shouted.

Aldrian looked at the Grand Duke and could see that he was genuinely angry this time. From his reaction, it seemed like this man—no, these three—had shared the same experience as some of the people who helped the devils. The devils must have already shown them their version of the future.

Still wearing a smile, Aldrian spoke to the Grand Duke.

"Frog in a well, huh? I don't think I want to hear that from someone like you—someone who chose to serve the devils after seeing their version of the future. I know you've seen what's coming from the devils' perspective, and when combined with the prophecy of the church, you grew scared and decided to help them, right?"

Grand Duke Donovan's eyes widened.

"How did you—"

"You surrendered to the devils because you believed there was no hope in the prophecy—a time when we would be unable to fight the devils. You thought it was impossible to face such power descending on this land. You believed fate had already been sealed, which is why I think you're the one who's the frog in a well," Aldrian said, his gaze turning toward another direction.

His expression held a sense of wisdom and serenity, as if he saw the future not as an unchangeable fate, but as something still uncertain.

Grand Duke Donovan gritted his teeth.

"What do you mean?" the Grand Duke asked, but Aldrian didn't answer. Instead, his thoughts drifted to his past and the people who had believed in him—those who waited for his return to his rightful 'place.' They were people he had never met in this life, yet they were the souls of the past, still waiting for him, even now.

They believed in him. And because of that belief, they could do anything, even wait for him, no matter how long it took. They waited for him to come, for there seemed to be a greater problem beyond the prophecy and stronger enemies out there, beside the devils.

But how could he face something that even the powerhouses and gods from the upper heavens seemed to have difficulty confronting? It wasn't something that could be explained by common sense. They needed more than a miracle.

Yet, they still placed their hope in him, carving a path for his return to the top.

Even though they knew he was weak now, not like he once was in his past life, they still waited.

Even though he had forgotten about them, they still waited.

They did not give up their hope for the future.

They did not give up their hope in him.

They did not give up.

They never gave up.

Looking at how some people on this continent surrendered to the devils out of fear of powers beyond their comprehension and comparing that to the will of the many who waited for him, was nothing short of an insult to those people.

However, he couldn't fully blame these people, because compared to those from his past, what the people of this continent lacked was hope itself. They couldn't see hope, and because of that, some had chosen to side with the devils. This was very different from the people of his past, who had already seen him as their hope and believed in his return.

Still, he couldn't forgive those who had made pacts with the devils. He also couldn't entirely blame the lack of hope, as many of these people were consumed by their own greed and negative emotions. The bad things they had done were undeniable, and he doubted they ever thought about the future while carrying out those deeds.

"Anyway, I think that's enough small talk. Let's continue our journey, shall we? I have not yet tried some methods in my mind, and I hope you can feel them until the end," Aldrian said, his voice full of spirit, as if trying to lift the mood of those around him.

Wilmar and the others' eyes trembled, and they couldn't help but look at Aldrian with various expressions.

"Please—"

"You bastard—"

"No—"

All of them wanted to say something, but Aldrian had already used his spatial lock to freeze them.

"Shh, shh, shh, don't talk too much. Just enjoy it as much as I enjoy it," Aldrian said.

For the next several hours, strange sounds echoed from one of the dungeon's rooms. Sometimes, a loud cry of pain could be heard throughout the dungeon, at other times, the cries were silent.

Occasionally, pleas for mercy were heard, only to be abruptly silenced.

None of this reached the ears of anyone above the dungeon, as Aldrian had already blocked everything from leaking outside, including the sounds.

Only after the sun had almost sunk below the western horizon did Aldrian finally emerge from the dungeon. He walked outside calmly, showing no signs of anything unusual about him. His clothes were still clean and neat, as if he hadn't done much inside.

The fifth finger, who had seen him come out, immediately appeared in front of him, not far from where he stood.

"Master," she said with a slight bow.

Aldrian nodded.

"Is there anything that I need to know?" He was too focused on those three and hadn't really paid attention to anything outside the dungeon.

"Yes, Lady Sylphia looked for master earlier, but I told her you were busy in the dungeon, so she went back to the mansion to wait for master."

Hearing this, Aldrian's eyes softened, and he nodded.

"Alright, thank you."

After that, the fifth finger disappeared.

Without wasting any time, Aldrian walked toward the mansion. It had already been almost two weeks since he had last seen her.

## **Chapter 476: Sweet Time**

On one of the balconies on the second floor, Sylphia stood gazing at the purplish sky on the western horizon, her lips curved in a slight smile. She wore a casual gown that accentuated her curves while still maintaining an air of elegance.

She seemed to be enjoying the beautiful view as a blanket of stars began to spread across the horizon.

Unbeknownst to her, someone had already been standing not far behind her—not only admiring the scenery but also savoring her presence.

"Ah!" she gasped, startled by the sudden arms that wrapped around her from behind. But she didn't resist. She knew who it was. Instead, her smile brightened as she finally breathed in his scent again.

"You really like surprising people. Don't you think that's bad behavior?" Sylphia asked.

"Well, what can I say? I do enjoy it. Besides, if I came the normal way, I'd ruin this beautiful scene—you and the starry sky after sunset, all in one frame," Aldrian said as he tightened his hold around her waist.

"Shameless," she muttered, turning her head slightly to glance at his face, which was already looking at her with a warm smile.

Slowly, his lips touched hers, and they savored the moment—their togetherness held within the serene atmosphere of the fading light.

Her hand reached up, resting on his head, holding him there, unwilling to let the moment slip away.

What began as an innocent and gentle kiss slowly deepened, growing more passionate as their tongues met. Sylphia and Aldrian continued to savor each other's lips and tongues for several minutes before finally parting, breathless.

They gazed into each other's eyes, warmth and affection flowing between them, and Sylphia rested her head against Aldrian's chest.



They stood in silence, continuing to watch the western horizon. The sky had turned fully dark, and a blanket of stars now stretched across the entire firmament, reaching all the way to the horizon.

But after five minutes of tranquil stillness beneath the serene atmosphere, Sylphia felt Aldrian's hand begin to wander. One of his hands touched her breast with deliberate intent, and his head dipped toward her neck, breathing in deeply, as though he wanted to make her scent his only air.

"Ah!" she moaned involuntarily at Aldrian's sudden touch. Her eyes fluttered shut as she felt his other hand attempt to touch her slit.

"Dear," she murmured, her voice heavy with desire as she tried to meet his gaze.

"I can't hold it anymore," Aldrian whispered, his voice low and filled with lust.

Moments later, the sound of clothes being removed and the erotic smooching sound filled the air. Not long after, Sylphia's moans, full of ecstasy, filled the air as Aldrian pounded her body with vigor. The clapping sound of flesh meeting flesh and a slight squelching noise continued for the next few hours.

Only after Aldrian had injected his seed into Sylphia ten times did they finally stop. Sylphia's body was exhausted, having orgasmed more than sixteen times. She slumped onto the bed, her skin glistening with sweat.

Her breath was irregular from the exhaustion, yet despite everything, her face held a satisfied expression. She smiled at him, still looking fresh and not tired beside her.

He didn't seem tired at all, even after all the vigorous pounding and many positions, which truly amazed her. She realized she couldn't satisfy Aldrian alone in one round anymore, which made her hope that Baek Jimin would be swallowed whole by Aldrian as soon as possible.

They cuddled under the blanket in silence for a few moments before Sylphia broke the stillness.

"So, have you achieved everything you wanted in this empire?" she asked.

Aldrian nodded.

"Yes, my objective here is done. I only need to take care of the aftermath after all the chaos. I can't just leave after capturing Wilmar and the others. I still need to make an appearance to calm the people, offer them support after the civil war, and help the imperial family stabilize the empire's situation," he said.

Sylphia nodded in understanding. She fell silent for a moment before asking again.

"So, the time has almost come for the continent to learn the truth about your family? With all the commotion I heard about you in the capital, you were fully revealed. Everyone across the continent will know your name, and it will echo for a long time."

Aldrian nodded.

"Yes, after everything I've done, I think it's okay for people to know about my family. With all those achievements and stories, the negative impact on the Rivas and Flamecrest families will be minimal, or even nonexistent at this point."

Sylphia continued to look at Aldrian, a question she had been thinking about for some time finally slipping from her lips.

"Why do you want your family to be known? You could keep your mysterious origins, continue doing things as you always have, and the people would still recognize you for who you are, not where you came from. Doesn't that seem safer than letting everyone know who your family is, especially your parents?"

Aldrian, still wearing his warm smile, gently touched her face with tenderness.

"This is all for my father and mother, I felt quite sad if I saw how they can't meet each other and showing their love for each other because of their families barrier. I want to see them happy after all the struggles they've endured, until this point, where they still love me,"

"I want them to unite so they can show each other love, just like you and me, without anyone casting a negative opinion on them. To maintain their dignity and honor as nobles, and to protect them from any ill intentions of those who might try to bring them down,"

"With me known as their son, only someone truly reckless would dare to confront them. From my perspective, there's far more benefit than loss in this scenario."

Sylphia felt deeply touched and couldn't help but feel proud of him. Despite his great power and extraordinary true origin, he was still a son to a father and mother.

She couldn't help but admire his character. Becoming one of the most, if not the most, powerful cultivators on the continent did not make him forget his parents. He still held filial piety and love for them, always hoping for the best for them.

But then, something else crossed her mind, something that made her worry.

"With your parents exposed, doesn't that mean the devils might try to take advantage of it? The devils might not be able to hurt you, but they could hurt your parents or even use them. What if they shift their focus entirely to your parents once they're known? With all

their tricks, I'm afraid your parents might be in danger before we even realize it," she said.

Hearing her concern, Aldrian looked toward the window where the curtain was drawn.

"They might try it, and I can see that as a possibility. My answer is simple, they can try, and I'll watch how they end up. If they do anything to harm my family, I will make them pay many times over." His eyes flashed dangerously.

Sylphia, who saw this, could only shudder and hope the devils were sensible enough not to target his parents. She couldn't imagine how he would respond if something happened to his parents.

Even when Eleine was almost killed, he had invaded the enemy's capital without hesitation. What if it were his parents? Would he invade devil territory alone? She felt a deep worry, but there was nothing she could do about it. All she could do was support him and help when needed.

"Anyway, let's not keep talking about something uncertain and worrisome. I'll think about it if something like that happens in the future. For now, let's enjoy our time together," Aldrian said, as he kissed her neck, making her instinctively giggle from the tickling sensation.

For the entire night, they indulged in their carnal desires. Of course, Sylphia had to rest a few times, but it didn't interrupt their passion and love. Even during their breaks, they deepened their bond through conversation on many topics.

They finally stopped when the first light of dawn began to appear.

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Yesterday's events in the Atria Empire spread like wildfire across the continent. The mysterious swordsman directly attacked the capital, showcasing his mighty technique that could destroy the entire land, clashing with Cardinal Carsius, who wielded a divine-grade spear.

This time, many recorded the event using information crystals, allowing others to witness it for themselves, even without having seen it firsthand.

Many who witnessed the event believed that this might be what a divine technique truly looked like. After so many years, someone had finally comprehended and executed it. Many were amazed and motivated after watching the recording, feeling that an era of change had begun. Perhaps it was the start of a time where cultivation standards would grow stronger again, returning to the past.

The people also finally learned the name of the mysterious swordsman. Aldrian quickly became the most talked-about name across the continent, one that many believed will be engraved in history. Some even agreed that, at this very moment, history had already written his name in golden letters, marking his place in the annals of time.

The name that would resound from this moment onward.

### **Chapter 477: Eleine, Remember This ...**

Aldrian was already outside the mansion with a refreshed mind. Swept by the morning breeze, his hair fluttered, giving him added charm. He closed his eyes in the middle of the training field, a peak Heaven-grade sword already in his grasp. He steadied himself with the sword as he lifted it in front of him.

After a few moments, he slowly opened his eyes and suddenly began a series of sword movements. Each movement was deadly, but behind that deadliness was an elegance for those who watched. Every strike was full of power, though at times it seemed as fragile as a falling petal, barely holding any force. The series of movements created a beautiful sword dance.

With the sunrise rising in the east and illuminating Aldrian, the scene offered a quiet aesthetic pleasure.

That was what the few people watching from afar saw. None of them dared to approach Aldrian or watch him too closely. They didn't want to disturb him or his beautiful moment.

But there was one person who stood closest, just beside the training field. A woman with snow-white hair and a face as beautiful as an angel.

She had been watching Aldrian from earlier, her eyes never leaving him for even a second. When Baek Jimin heard that Aldrian had returned yesterday, she wanted to see him—but she knew Sylphia also wanted the same, so she took a step back.

Now, seeing him again in the quiet of the morning, she felt lucky to witness such a beautiful scene.

After a few minutes of continuous movements from his sword dance, Aldrian finally stopped. Like a respected sword cultivator caring for his blade, he sheathed his sword with reverence.

Many of those watching felt as if they had just emerged from a trance. All they could do was admire him with silent amazement. Even watching the flow of his sword had given them insight—some even felt the touch of enlightenment.

Aldrian took a deep breath and exhaled, then turned to look at the woman who had been standing not far from him. He smiled at her and began to walk toward her.

"It's not like you to train like this with a sword in the morning," Baek Jimin said.

"Well, I just felt like it. I got inspiration, so I took advantage of the moment to train with the sword and develop a series of movements and techniques," Aldrian answered as he sat on the bench near the training field, with Baek Jimin quietly following him.

They sat side by side, though Baek Jimin still kept a bit of distance. She seemed too shy to sit any closer. Her feelings had been growing for some time, and now that she was so aware of them, she couldn't act like just a normal friend around him anymore.

Aldrian didn't seem to mind. He let her do what made her comfortable.

"Um, about what happened yesterday... are you okay after all that?" Baek Jimin asked.

Her question was vague, but Aldrian understood what she meant. He kept his smile.

"I'm okay. There's nothing wrong, and in fact, I've already prepared for the consequences of yesterday's events. What happened just hastened everything in my plan, so there's not much trouble."

Hearing Aldrian's reassuring tone, she sighed in relief and calmed herself.

"If you say so," she replied, then fell silent.

"Jimin, I still haven't fulfilled one of your requests because of all these problems. But now that everything is almost settled, how about tomorrow? You have time, right?" Aldrian said suddenly.

Baek Jimin felt a bit confused, but then she remembered the request she had made to him back then: to take a walk together, just the two of them.

She had actually felt satisfied when they visited Weimar City alone and strolled around, enjoying everything the city had to offer. However, it seemed Aldrian still saw that as something different from her request, since they had gone to the city for his business and had simply taken advantage of the moment to go for a stroll.

Aldrian still remembered her request, which made her genuinely happy. She couldn't help but blush at his attentiveness and lowered her head.

"Yes, I have time tomorrow," she replied.

"Perfect. That settles it, then," Aldrian said with a smile.

After that, they enjoyed the quiet, serene atmosphere for a few more minutes before noticing an incoming figure. She appeared to be doing her morning jog, dressed in training attire that accentuated her body, with sweat rolling down her skin, glistening in the light. Her long blue hair, tied in a ponytail, also shimmered slightly under the early morning sun.

Eleine was simply going through one of her daily morning routines—jogging. When she saw Aldrian and Baek Jimin, her face broke into a smile as she approached them.

"Good morning, young master. Good morning, Jimin," she said.

"Morning, Eleine. Finished with your morning exercise?" Aldrian asked.

"Hmm," Eleine nodded, but then she bowed deeply to Aldrian, which left both him and Baek Jimin stunned.

"I'm sorry, young master, I'm ashamed that I made you do all of that. For you to directly attack the second prince. I'm sorry for burdening you." she said, her voice filled with self-blame.

Aldrian looked at Eleine, unsurprised that she knew the real reason behind his more direct approach of attacking the capital. His initial plan had been to slowly dwindle the second prince's forces across the empire, but that had been thrown out the window once the second prince launched the gu outbreak plan.

An outbreak that nearly cost Eleine her life, and that was what led him to decide on a frontal approach without hesitation. Because of that, all the plans in his mind had to be fast-tracked. But he didn't find it annoying, in fact, it only hastened the process, and he benefited from it.

A heavy silence followed, and Eleine remained motionless. Then Aldrian's voice broke the stillness.

"Eleine, look at me," he said softly.

Eleine slightly raised her head and looked into Aldrian's face, where a warm expression was directed at her. His smile and gentle gaze were reassuring, full of affection.

"If something were to happen to me—something that would put me in danger—what would you do? What would you do to the one responsible for putting me at risk?" he asked.

Eleine's expression grew serious, her face filled with determination.

"Of course, I would hunt them down. I would make sure they pay for harming you, young master. Even if I can't do anything else, I will sacrifice myself to inflict the most damage on the perpetrator."

However, as if she knew where the conversation was going, Eleine slightly bowed her body again.

"Young master, I know what you're trying to say, but that is—"

"That is your duty to guard me, to keep me safe. And it is also your duty to hunt down anyone who harms me," Aldrian's words cut through her sentence, leaving Eleine silent as she held her position.

"Do you think I don't need to do all of that and disrupt my plan? Is it because you feel you're not worth it, even after what they did to you?" Aldrian's voice suddenly became flat, and Eleine felt a wave of tension.

"Do you underestimate me and my feelings for those closest to me, Eleine?"

Hearing that, Eleine quickly straightened her posture and looked at Aldrian. She felt a surge of panic as she saw his expressionless face, something he had never directed at her before.

"No, absolutely not, young master," she said urgently. "I don't mean it like that. I'm truly thankful and honored by your actions. The reason you did all of that is because of me, but I still feel bad for affecting your overall plan. What I mean is... you don't have to do all of that because I'm already safe and sound, right? As long as I'm alive, you don't have to do something drastic that could affect you."

Her words were laced with slight panic, as she didn't want Aldrian to misunderstand her.

She then kowtowed to him.

"I'm sorry if what I said hurt you, young master. I didn't mean it that way, and it was never my intent to belittle you. You can punish me for making you think that," she said.

There was silence after that, and she waited nervously. She then felt Aldrian stand up from his seat and approach her.

She braced herself for punishment, but to her surprise, she felt her body lift as Aldrian used his control over the surrounding energy to raise her.

She couldn't control her body until she stood up, and when she looked at his face again, she saw that his expression had softened, filled with warmth and affection.



Without hesitation, he quickly embraced her, a tender hug that left her stunned. She looked at him in bewilderment.

"Young master?"

"Eleine, remember this very clearly: you are one of my closest people, and one of the ones I trust the most. You have a special place in my heart, one that will always make you special compared to others. Don't belittle your position, because the one who was offended is no one but me. Don't diminish your worth in my eyes, because I'm the one who decides that."

"Eleine, don't ever think that you're less important just because you're by my side due to my mother's orders. I know you've been trained that way, but you must realize that your presence in my life, since the day I was born, is not something I merely consider a mother's retainer following orders. No, you've already become my family. You are significant to me and always will be."

Aldrian then looked at her face, which was already slightly watery.

"You are already my family, my protector, my teacher, my advisor, my retainer—everything."

"So don't ever say that you're not worthy of my full support, or that I don't have to do this or that because you feel it's not worth it for you."

"Anyone who harms you will have to face me. This is not a promise; it is my principle and my vow to myself."

Eleine's tears finally fell.

## **Chapter 478: The Fate of the Nobles**

Seeing Eleine cry, Aldrian hugged her again with tenderness. Eleine also embraced her young master, instinctively trying to hide her eyes against his body. He let her be and held her in silence, the quiet occasionally broken by her sniffles.

After a while, Eleine pulled away, having managed to stop her tears, though her eyes were still red and wet. She wiped them and, once she felt composed enough, bowed deeply to Aldrian.

"Thank you, Young Master, for thinking of me that way. Thank you for everything you've done for me. I'm sorry I didn't consider your perspective enough and ended up making you uncomfortable," she said.

"Good. Now that you understand, you don't have to feel burdened anymore," Aldrian replied with a smile.

Eleine straightened her posture and nodded with a small smile. After that, she excused herself, leaving Aldrian and Baek Jimin, who continued their conversation about many things until the sun fully revealed itself to the people of the continent.

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In the afternoon, the emperor gathered the heads of all noble families from every faction involved in the civil war. However, not all of them could attend—some were already dead, so their families had to send representatives in their place. There were also noble houses that had vanished entirely, their bloodlines wiped out by Wilmar for opposing him.

As a result, the number of noble families was no longer what it used to be.

All of this had significantly weakened the empire's power, which was deeply detrimental to its stability. Given the circumstances, Emperor Raymond would need to make several adjustments to the empire's structure.

Emperor Raymond was already seated on his throne in the great hall—the same throne that Wilmar had seized for the past year. Standing behind him was Prince Ferdinand, looking refreshed and healthy. After being bedridden for over a year, he had regained his strength thanks to Aldrian's healing. His physical condition had improved significantly.

With the help of Aldrian's golden energy, both Emperor Raymond and Prince Ferdinand recovered quickly, allowing them to resume their duties almost immediately, despite having been confined to their rooms for so long.

Emperor Raymond's eyes swept toward the left side of the hall, where the noble families who had supported Wilmar were gathered. They flinched slightly under his gaze, none of them daring to lift their heads to meet his eyes.

Tap, tap, tap.

The only sound in the hall was the steady tapping of the emperor's fingers against the armrest, as if lost in thought. The atmosphere grew increasingly tense with each passing moment.

After a few minutes of silence, Emperor Raymond finally spoke.

"To be honest, I would prefer to execute every one of you for betraying me and bringing ruin to the empire by siding with that bastard. But after thinking it through, I cannot deny that your strength is still useful—and the timing of the prophecy is also weighing on my mind. So, I have made my decision about your fate from this day forward."

The bodies of the noble families who had supported Wilmar tensed as they awaited their judgment. Meanwhile, many of the noble heads from the opposing side watched them with cold eyes. They had suffered the most during the war, having been at a severe disadvantage before Aldrian's arrival. Many had lost loved ones, and their forces had been reduced by more than half.

Some families were left with only two or three surviving high-ranking members, a devastating blow to their long-term survival.

"I have decided that all noble families who supported Wilmar will be demoted to the lowest rank of nobility. Your territories will be seized as compensation. In addition, each of you will be required to pay annual reparations for the next twenty years. The amount will depend on the size of your fortune and the extent of your involvement in the civil war."

"You will also surrender your family's legacy technique to the imperial family, along with one of your family's artifacts. I don't care if it's the only artifact your house has left."

After Emperor Raymond announced his decision, the heads of the noble families who had supported Wilmar felt their hearts tighten, and their faces turned pale. As for the opposing nobles, while a part of them remained dissatisfied because they had hoped for executions, the punishment was still undeniably severe.

Stripping them of their status and seizing their legacy techniques and artifacts was the same as taking away their strength and their way of life. With the enemies they had accumulated over the years, made worse by the civil war, this would lead to their slow collapse. The only thing left to protect them was their noble status, though it now stood at the lowest possible rank.

However, that noble status was merely a fragile shell, devoid of much influence. Many people would view these families with contempt and hatred. The imperial family's treatment of them would also influence how the rest of the empire treated them, ensuring they would face humiliation even from commoners.

They would no longer be able to act recklessly, as they had in the past, because they no longer held the influence they once did. They would have to endure the hurdles and humiliations ahead on their own.

They also understood why the emperor spared their lives instead of executing them or their families. The reason went beyond political concerns; what the emperor still sought was their individual strength. The number of noble families that had supported Wilmar was large, and their combined strength was immense.

Some of these families were at the level of marquesses, with king-stage cultivators in their ranks, or even dukedoms with emperor-stage cultivators. In fact, two of the four grand dukes had supported Wilmar.

If the emperor had executed them, it would have been the same as crippling the empire's overall power. So, how would the imperial family control them? The answer lay in keeping their nobility status, even if it was the lowest rank. With their noble status intact, they still held certain responsibilities and connections to the imperial family.

Basically, Emperor Raymond still had a leash around their necks, one he could tighten or loosen at will. It was a truly wise and clever decision on the emperor's part, one that left the nobles here impressed by his cunning.

"Your Majesty, please—"

"Are you trying to question my decision, traitor?"

One of the noble heads from Wilmar's faction attempted to speak, but the emperor cut him off. Emperor Raymond released the aura of a high emperor-stage cultivator and the pressure was so intense that the space around him began to wobble.

The person who attempted to speak was Grand Duke Volski, one of the four grand dukes of the Atria Empire. He and Grand Duke Donovan were key figures in Wilmar's faction due to their status, but because Grand Duke Donovan was more influential and dominant, Grand Duke Volski often found himself overshadowed.

Emperor Raymond's aura exerted immense pressure on Grand Duke Volski, and even his killing intent leaked slightly. Prince Ferdinand, though not the direct target of this killing intent, still felt a chill run down his spine, as if he were facing the Grim Reaper himself.

Everyone present felt the same sensation, but the worst of it was on Grand Duke Volski, the main target. It was as though he were standing directly beneath a guillotine, where the slightest movement could result in his execution. Yet, he knew that this was only an illusion caused by the intense killing intent from the emperor, a reminder that Emperor Raymond, too, had blood on his hands from the past.

"You should be thankful that I did not execute you or your family for your actions against me and this empire," Emperor Raymond said, his expression cold. "If you utter any pleas, I will choose a different punishment for you and your family."

Grand Duke Volski, overwhelmed by the pressure and feeling as if the eyes of a predator were upon him, sensed death looming. Without hesitation, he immediately bowed low.

"My apologies for my presumptuous actions. I will obey your Majesty's decision," he finally said, before the emperor retracted his aura. The people in the hall were able to breathe a sigh of relief once again.

"As for the other nobles, I will raise their status one level higher as a reward for fighting against the traitors. You will also receive some of their treasure as compensation for the civil war. Those near the territories of these traitors will be given part of their land."

Hearing this, many noble heads from the opposition faction widened their eyes, unable to hide their bright expressions. At least they had gained something positive after all their losses in the civil war.

Afterward, the emperor spoke a few more words to the nobles before dismissing them, but then he made an exception.

"For the Rosalind family and the Weimar family, stay here. I have something to discuss."

### **Chapter 479: How to Please Him?**

After the other nobles left the throne hall, only Emperor Raymond, Prince Ferdinand, Baroness Weimar, and Baron Rosalind remained. The emperor's expression immediately turned more amicable as he looked at the heads of the two families.

"I would like to thank you personally for standing against those traitors. You have already sacrificed much, and I hope my earlier decision has eased your burden and sorrow," Emperor Raymond said.

"No, Your Majesty. It is my duty to uphold the stability of the empire and to stand against anyone who threatens it," Baroness Weimar replied with a slight bow.

"I feel unworthy of your praise, Your Majesty. This was a battle for my family's survival. With His Highness—no, with Wilmar targeting everyone who didn't support him, we had no choice but to defend ourselves. He had already gone too far by killing so many innocents," Baron Rosalind said.

Hearing this, the emperor smiled as if he approved of their words.

"Whatever the reason behind your actions against those traitors, the truth remains that you helped both me and the people across the empire who opposed Wilmar. So, I still think highly of you," he said.

"Anyway, there's something else I want to ask you about."

Baron Weimar and Baron Rosalind looked at the emperor with curiosity. They also wondered why they had been asked to remain, as neither believed they had done anything to warrant a private conversation with him.

"I want to talk about young Aldrian."

When they heard the name, they finally understood. However, confusion still lingered. They could not understand why Emperor Raymond would bring them into a discussion about Aldrian.

"I have heard that the two of you have the most contact with him among the nobles of the empire," Emperor Raymond said. "I want to ask you what kind of person young Aldrian is. Do you know where he comes from or anything about his background? We only know that he has some sort of connection to the Church, but he is not a member. and in your opinion, how should we make this empire feel like his home?"

Baroness Weimar and Baron Rosalind finally understood what this was about. Emperor Raymond felt it would be a waste to let someone like Aldrian slip away without trying to build a connection. To be honest, they also believed it was a good idea. Someone like Aldrian could bring tremendous benefit, and there would be no harm in trying to draw him to their side.

Now that Aldrian had become well known after the civil war, it was only natural that many, even those from beyond the empire, would try to approach him. Emperor Raymond clearly wished to establish a deeper relationship with him before others could. The two barons fell into thought, their expressions turning contemplative.

"Answering Your Majesty, as for his background, this subject does not know much. However, from what I know of him, he is someone who keeps his word once he speaks, and he does not engage in anything pointless. Everything he does has a purpose. From a materialistic standpoint, he does not seem like the type to pursue wealth or status. This is evident when he took control of Caritas—he did not seem to care much about his own status, as he never flaunted it," Baroness Weimar finally said.

"He governs with integrity, and it can be said that he is firm in his resolve. He punished those who caused chaos in Caritas when he took the city."

"Well, at least that is how I felt about him when I met him and heard his story afterward. For someone like him, in my opinion, it would be difficult to make him feel that this empire is his home through offers of wealth or similar things. The only way for us to bring him to our side and make this empire his home is to show that we are truly sincere in wanting to befriend him. He will naturally come to consider this empire his home."

"In other words, we can't force ourselves on him. Instead, we must let him feel our sincerity and intent. Although it may take longer, this is the most appropriate way to win his heart."

"That is what I think, Your Majesty," Baroness Weimar concluded.

Hearing her, Baron Rosalind nodded in agreement.

"I agree, Your Majesty. I can tell that he is not someone interested in wealth or treasure artifacts. When he visited my mansion, he seemed indifferent to the artifacts. If not for certain circumstances, I doubt he would have even looked at our legacy treasures. With his strength, if he had any greed, he could easily take them from us."

"So, my opinion is the same as Baroness Weilmars. He is not someone who can be won over with offers," he said.

"Ah, I also think he really cares about his relationships with his group. I heard from my daughter, who traveled with his group, that his group members told her how Aldrian took care of them and always tried to bring them along wherever he could. He even gave them resources for cultivation when he had them, as though he didn't feel the need for the resources himself. Even if they refused, he would keep pushing them."

"He also has a lover, whom he pampers and gives much attention to. So, that's that."

"Therefore, I think the best way to make him feel at home is to truly maintain a good relationship with him and his group, with sincerity and genuine help, without overwhelming him with offers."

"Perhaps we can start with his group. If we gain their favor, they will naturally stop feeling that this land is foreign to them, and it will also affect young Master Aldrian," Baron Rosalind concluded, stopping his analysis.

Emperor Raymond pondered what they had said, and he too agreed with their assessment. He could see it himself and was beginning to understand Aldrian's character. Even in front of the imperial family's legacy artifact, Aldrian's interest seemed more out of curiosity than covetousness.

With his character and strength, he doubted that Aldrian needed anything from him—or anyone, for that matter. They could only wait passively for what he might need, as pushing too hard would likely be seen as nagging, making Aldrian uncomfortable.

After discussing the matter of Aldrian with the two barons, Emperor Raymond arrived at the same conclusion: Aldrian valued relationships and how people acted toward him more than material things or status.

After reaching that conclusion, Emperor Raymond seemed to have found the direction he wanted to take, and a slight smile appeared on his face. Seeing the emperor's smile, the two barons knew that something had sparked in the emperor's mind.

Just as the emperor had come to a decision, one of his guards suddenly entered the hall, walking quickly to kneel before him.

"My apologies for disturbing Your Majesty, but I bring news. His Excellency, Lord Aldrian, has arrived at the palace—"



"What?" Even before the guard could finish, the emperor stood up, cutting him off. The two barons were equally shocked that Aldrian had come to visit the palace.

Emperor Raymond then spoke urgently.

"Where is he? Quickly, let him in. Don't keep him waiting."

"We have already given him the best room and were just waiting for Your Majesty's approval. I will call Lord Aldrian now," the guard replied.

"Quickly," the emperor urged.

Not long after, Aldrian entered, dressed in his noble attire, which only added to his striking presence. His handsome face and natural charisma were enough to captivate anyone. Even Baroness Weimar felt her heart skip a beat when she saw Aldrian in such attire.

"Ah, young Aldrian, why didn't you tell me first if you wanted to come? Fortunately, you didn't have to see those ugly traitors. If you had come earlier, you would have seen them. Had you informed me of your arrival sooner, I wouldn't have called them to the palace, and I even cleared my schedule for today," Emperor Raymond said as he walked toward Aldrian.

"Well, my apologies, Your Majesty, for my sudden visit, but there is something I wish to discuss with you," Aldrian said with a smile, then turned his gaze to Prince Ferdinand standing behind the emperor.

"Your condition has greatly improved, Your Highness. I'm glad to see you're almost fully recovered."

"It's thanks to you, Sir Aldrian. There's no way I would be like this without your treatment," Prince Ferdinand replied, his tone full of gratitude. Aldrian nodded with a smile and then turned his attention to Baron Rosalind and Baroness Weimar.

"It's good to see you both in such good health. I hope my visit hasn't disrupted your meeting."

"No, of course not. It's nothing that requires too much attention," Baron Rosalind said.

"Yes, we're actually pleased by your visit right now," Baroness Weimar added.

They both hoped he hadn't heard their discussion about him. It would be embarrassing and awkward if he knew what they had talked about.

After exchanging a few pleasantries in a warm atmosphere, the emperor finally asked Aldrian:

"So, what is it that you want to discuss, young Aldrian?"

## Chapter 470: Start the Pursuit

Aldrian opened his eyes as he left his mindscape and let out a quiet sigh. His heart felt heavy, but he tried not to let it distract him. He glanced at the ring for a moment.

*"Although I don't remember you yet, I've already received your plea. If something truly happened to the Silver Lightning Dragon Clan, I will avenge you."*

He knew he had already acted recklessly by accepting Long Leiyun's request without knowing the true condition of the clan or the identity of the parties he might have to face. Any group capable of endangering the Silver Lightning Dragon Clan was not to be underestimated. He suspected these were the same parties Long Leiyun had spoken of earlier.

But he still accepted Long Leiyun's request because his heart told him to, and he also felt it was something he needed to do. A dragon's will whose only purpose was to wait for his arrival for who knows how long and to pass on a few pieces of information showed just how much faith Long Leiyun truly had in him. That conviction was what had kept him holding on until today.

If someone could hold that kind of loyalty and faith in him, he couldn't bring himself to reject the request outright.

His heart told him it wasn't right. He would respond in kind, according to how people treated him.

Long Leiyun's request made him wonder what had really happened to the Silver Lightning Dragon Clan. However, without enough information and with no one who could provide it, he decided to put that concern aside for now. There were other matters that needed his attention.

After glancing at the ring for a few more seconds, he turned his body and looked at Emperor Raymond. He was stunned to see the emperor already slumped to the ground, staring at him with a blank expression. Aldrian couldn't help but smile at the sight of him acting this way. He wondered what had happened while he was inside his mindscape.

Aldrian then walked toward the emperor, the surrounding silence still unbroken as the lightning had yet to appear, even after he had finished checking the ring.

Once Aldrian was near Emperor Raymond, the emperor unconsciously blurted out the question that had been stuck in his mind since earlier.

"Who are you?" His voice trembled.

Aldrian smiled at the emperor and offered his hand to help him up.

"I'm just someone who happens to have great power and responsibility."

His answer still left the emperor staring at him with a blank expression, as if he wasn't satisfied with it. Emperor Raymond reluctantly took Aldrian's hand and stood up. Aldrian then walked past him, still smiling.

"Your Majesty, I'm already done here. Let's go back. I'm finished with the sightseeing." Aldrian said.

Emperor Raymond turned his head to look at Aldrian's back, then glanced at the ring again. He didn't know why, but he felt something different about it. He sighed and decided to follow Aldrian. What he had just witnessed would be engraved in his mind, and he needed to ask Aldrian later about what had happened.

He followed Aldrian down from the platform and, just as he did, he finally heard the thunderclap again. He looked up and saw strands of lightning between the clouds. Finally, the lightning bolts struck the earth again, and the ring was struck by the lightning just like before. A few seconds later, the lightning returned to normal across the secret realm.

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A few moments later, Aldrian and Emperor Raymond were outside of the secret realm. The moment they stepped out, they were stunned to see that more troops had already arrived at the location.

Besides the four guardians, Aldrian noticed more than a dozen cultivators, ranging from marquess to king stage, all nervously watching their direction. However, as soon as they saw Emperor Raymond and Aldrian step out from the secret realm, they froze for a moment. Then, they quickly straightened their posture.

"Your Majesty, is everything alright?" one of the guardian knights asked, worry evident in his voice. He even stole a glance at Aldrian with a hint of suspicion.

At this time, their emotions were still in turmoil because of the roar from the unknown beast. The four guardians of the secret realm were the ones who had gathered everyone here after hearing the sound. Since they were the closest to the secret realm, they could clearly feel the overwhelming aura and the effects that radiated from within.

That was what made them shudder. The secret realm was a separate space that should have sealed everything inside. For the roar and aura to break through and spread outside, it could only mean that the beast which had appeared inside was powerful enough to overwhelm even the boundaries of the realm itself.

This was also what left them confused. As far as they knew, there were no beasts within the secret realm. That uncertainty caused the guardians to grow suspicious of Aldrian, who had entered the realm together with the emperor.

They had immediately raised the alarm and called for support from anyone nearby to come to the secret realm, even preparing to enter it themselves. At this moment, even more troops were still arriving in response to the emergency signal.

Emperor Raymond understood their panic. Even he had been affected by the appearance of the dragon.

"Stand down. There is no danger. The beast is not hostile and has already been taken care of, so there is no need to remain in a state of emergency. All of you are dismissed," Emperor Raymond said.

Hearing the emperor's words, the troops felt a wave of relief and allowed their tense shoulders to relax. Although they were curious about what had happened inside the secret realm, none of them dared to question the emperor, let alone Aldrian.

Aldrian and the emperor approached the carriage, but Aldrian quickly noticed that four horned horses pulling it were in a state of distress. They were trembling, sitting on the ground, and barely moving. The coachman looked exhausted, as if he had already tried everything to calm them down, but their condition remained unchanged.

"What happened?" the emperor asked.

"Forgive me, Your Majesty," the coachman replied apologetically, "but the horses became like this after hearing the roar of an unknown beast from the secret realm. They still seem terrified and refuse to move."

Emperor Raymond raised his eyebrows. Well, it was to be expected—there was no way normal beasts like horned horses could remain unaffected after hearing such a mighty roar.

Aldrian approached the horses and knelt beside them, then gently injected his golden energy into their bodies to help them feel warm and at ease. He wanted to ease their stress, and from the coachman's explanation, he realized

something must have happened while he was focused on the ring and creating his domain.

The coachman watched in amazement as Aldrian's golden energy soothed the horses. After a few minutes, all four returned to normal. They even moved closer to Aldrian, as if they were drawn to him and wanted to stay near.

Aldrian smiled and gently patted their large bodies before turning to the emperor.

"Your Majesty, I think it's time for me to go. I have something to take care of right now, and it concerns those traitors. Your Majesty can return to the imperial palace without needing to escort me."

Emperor Raymond was stunned, but then he asked,

"Do you need my help? I know you're capable, but I believe they've already escaped far away, and it will be very difficult to find them if they put effort into hiding. I can announce a wide-scale search across the empire to make things easier for you."

Aldrian smiled and shook his head.

"No, that won't be necessary, Your Majesty. I have a much simpler method that won't waste any resources, and they'll be caught in no time," he said.

Aldrian then focused and contacted the heavens. Now that the entire Atria Empire had become his domain, he could locate them with the help of the heavens.

After asking for their location and receiving the heavens' response, Aldrian was stunned for a moment, but then his eyes flashed coldly.

*"It seems he truly chose the most painful death possible."*

He had already predicted that his targets might make a desperate move, but he hadn't expected one of them to come straight to his nest!

However, Aldrian's eyes turned serene again, with no trace of worry. In fact, he felt this was the best possible outcome. Did 'he' truly believe 'he' could leave his nest after entering it? The man would be in for a surprise when he encountered those who were there. Those people were more than enough to catch him.

With 'him' there, Aldrian could then focus on pursuing the others.

"Your Majesty, I'll go first. I'll meet you again later, for now, I need to catch those rats," Aldrian said.

Emperor Raymond nodded.

"Alright."

With that, Aldrian disappeared, leaving the emperor and the capital behind.

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At Caritas, the situation had returned to normal. Many people resumed their daily activities. The outbreak, which had occurred more than a week ago, still left scars on many as they mourned the loss of loved ones. Yet, life had to go on, and so they continued with their routines, trying to numb the pain in their hearts.

Amidst the bustling activities of the city's people, there was someone who did not appear to have come with good intentions. His cold gaze was fixed in the direction of the mayor's mansion.