

The Duke 531

Chapter 531 - Fabian's Theory

"Your Majesty!"

The voices of those people behind the line sounded distant as time seemed to slow down. The sword was coming at my head and it was already too close to stop it.

My initial thought as soon as I realize this was to sacrifice my arm. Losing a limb was better than losing my life. Hence, I raised my arm without a second hesitation to deflect it. This wouldn't be painful, and even if it was, I would be alright.

As I prepared to swing my arm, which I believed the last time I would feel it, a deafening clang resounded in my ear. Time started ticking back at its normal pace as the sword flew away, piercing the concrete with the decapitated arm still holding on to it.

"Your Majesty, that is dangerous." I slowly shifted my eyes to the person standing beside me, wide-eyed. "Did you just think of sacrificing your arm?"

"Fabian!" Just as I yelled, I pressed Lakresha's chine on Acheron's throat so he wouldn't do anything funny. Fabian smiled politely as usual as he beckoned a neck bow. But before he could talk, he stabbed the arm that was returning to Acheron's torso with his spear as if he was catching a fish.

"Ughh!!" This time, Acheron cried in pain. When I decapitated him, he didn't even show the slightest pain. But he was writhing in pain when Fabian stabbed his severed limb. His other hand was still stuck on the concrete with the sword, but it was shaking as if attempting to return to its owner.

"What the hell?" came out a murmur, realizing Acheron wasn't like a normal vampire anymore. No normal human or vampire could still use their severed arms.

"A noble vampire slash undead," Fabian spoke while gazing at Acheron solemnly. "What a troublesome mix."

"Ughhh!" Acheron grunted louder as Fabian stabbed him deeper, twisting it carefully as if to make the former feel his flesh within being slowly torn.

"Will he die if..." I trailed off, pulling my other arm back while keeping my fingers straight with my nails as sharp as claws. I used my hand like a sword and slashed the man's throat without batting an eye, severing his neck entirely.

"... I severed his head?"

My eyes remained on Acheron's open eyes, but he wasn't making a sound anymore. I glanced at the gap of his neck and head, seeing connecting shrouds that proved my theory. This man wouldn't die even if I minced him to many pieces. Although he seemed unconscious now, I was certain he would regain consciousness if he was connected to one piece once again.

How troublesome, indeed.

"His brain, Your Majesty," Fabian spoke with the same tone while I didn't take my eyes off of Acheron's neck. "If you want to kill someone like him, his skull should be completely destroyed..."

Before Fabian could finish his words and crush Acheron's head, the two of us sprung away because of the dangerous presence that approached us. He was fast, so if we were both a second later, we would be in danger.

A figure was squatting down near Acheron as thin dust ascended from his landing. While it seemed he was buying time, I glanced at Fabian, who stood next to me. He looked like someone who didn't even fight, as there was no trace of blood on his clothes.

"Where have you been Fabian?" I asked while massaging my neck, ignoring the blood in my hand as my neck and shoulder were stiff. "Did you find something important?"

"Not really..." He cast me a side-eye, making me arch my brow while he immediately averted his eyes. "I encountered a few troublesome lads who wasted my time."

"I see... so you just finished?" I nodded while glancing at the people on our side who were staring blankly at the thin smoke from our enemies. Fear plastered across their faces in disbelief that someone like Acheron was still alive after all that.

But before I could snap them back to the current lapse, my brows furrowed at Fabian's reply.

"No, I am not yet finished." I gazed at him in disbelief while he smiled at me, closed-lipped. "I just escaped since I was worried about Her Majesty and the young master, but now they caught up."

BOOM!

Just as Fabian uttered those words, two more figures appeared near Acheron. My jaw slightly fell open, sensing everyone's powerful aura. Did Fabian just bring more enemies in here?!

I blinked twice, gasping in dismay before casting Fabian a look. "Were you really worried? Or do you need help?" was he facing three enemies at the same time? Surely, Zero was wariier of Fabian than me, which was understandable since this man was, well, troublesome to deal with.

"I am genuinely worried, Madam, since I had a terrifying theory," he answered solemnly, shifting his eyes towards the people. "It's better if I fight close to you so we can look out for each other."

This time, I couldn't argue with him as I nodded in agreement. That was correct. It was better for Fabian and me to fight side by side. Although the enemies would only grow in number, we could look out for each other's back.

"If my theory is correct, we all need to flee Minowa," Fabian added in a solemn tone, still staring at the people behind the line. "The situation is more dangerous and even if the news reaches the capital, it will take a few days for His Majesty to come."

My expression grew solemn as I glanced at Fabian once again. I've rarely seen Fabian become this serious, and I instantly knew he was concerned about the situation.

"Do you think we can't handle Zero?" I asked, along with a deep exhale, setting my eyes back at the four figures, including Acheron, rising from the dust. I squinted my eyes as I studied the three people who also appeared.

"Quentin..." Fabian trailed off as he exhaled sharply, tapping the long handle of his spear against his shoulder. "His presence in here was already a pain in the neck, but my concern is there is a high possibility that the previous emperor is also here."

I instantly froze as soon as I heard him. At the same time, the three figures with Acheron grew clearer and familiar. Ahh... my grip around Lakresha tightened as I realized who were these three people. The members of the Order who received direct orders from Stefan in the past: Maxine, George, and Benedict.

"Ahh... damn," came out a curse as my stomach contracted with this new information. "No wonder it took you so long to come."

Chapter 532 - Weak And Pathetic Butler

Maxine, George, and Benedict were capable members of the Divine Order. Back in the palace during Stefan's time, they split the bearers of the divine weapons. The third squadron was under Rufus; those in the third squadron, Ramin, Kristina, and Charlotte, were the people who had a strong sense of being a bearer that they refused to receive direct orders from the king.

Initially, Rufus wasn't royalty. So, they didn't have a problem working with him, considering the matters of the Undead. But because of the bond we created and all the schemes behind the kingdom, we learned to trust each other. Those three who initially bore prejudice against the royals ended up serving me, then, Sam.

Unlike those three, these three had been receiving orders from Stefan ever since. To them, Stefan was their king — their God. It would be presumptuous of me if I say they were traitors of the Order because that wasn't the case.

The bearers of the Divine Order were just individuals who had a duty to keep the kingdom, now an empire, from falling. As a bearer myself, I finally understood the vagueness of our duty. What it meant to be a bearer was we had the liberty to support whom we believed was the best person to sit on the throne.

We believed it was Sam, and they believed it was Stefan.

The bearers weren't about the unity, to begin with. We were but individuals who were capable enough to do what we believed was best in this land.

'I still couldn't understand Soran's reasoning why he created the Divine Weapons,' I told myself, staring sharply at Acheron and those three bearers. 'Didn't he consider we can fight each other when we believed in different things?'

"You are still as sneaky as ever, butler." Finally, Maxine spoke coldly. She was blindfolded, but I could feel her glaring at us. "You are correct, Fabian the Butler. After taking out my eyesight, I could see things clearer."

"I am never wrong." Fabian smiled politely, nodding in agreement. "I'm glad that... Benedict, is it? Is alive."

"I am flattered that you remember my name, Fabian," Benedict, the tall, lean man, chuckled weakly. "If not, the scar you left in my heart after stabbing it will ache for sure."

George, the person who had the biggest physique among the bearers of the Divine Order, like Glory, huffed. "We will not hold back this time, Butler. This time, we will take your head."

"I missed you three as well." Fabian's smile persisted, upsetting the three, who held a deep grudge against him. I didn't know the details of their abhorrence, but knowing Fabian, he must've scarred their pride as warriors.

"Your Majesty, I must say you are as vicious as ever. How can you cut my neck before you can finish your sentence?" this time, Acheron, who was stretching his neck and was back to one piece, spoke.

My head throbbed at this troublesome situation. I scratched my temple, recalling Fabian's words of aiming at their heads. Their regeneration was crazy. Was it because they were vampires turned into undeads? The human turned undead weren't this hard to deal with, but now they had evolved.

That Zero and Stefan surely never ceased to amaze me with their schemes. If those two were indeed in Minowa, that only meant those attacks in the east and west were just a distraction, so Sam would leave this place. If that was the case, they had already planned this a long time ago.

"Impossible..." I snapped my eyes when I heard someone from our audience speak in a shaking voice. I turned my head in their standpoint, and someone slumped on his butt while staring at Acheron.

"How can he be back in one piece?"

The sense of dread shrouding them felt distinct. Who wouldn't? Acheron was already a strong opponent, but now there were four of them. Even a normal human could sense that these four weren't people who were easily defeated.

"Your Majesty..." I shifted my eyes to Glory. His expression was a mix of fear and determination, holding an ax tightly. "I may not be powerful enough, but... let us fight with you."

"Are you insane?" Jaime gasped, grinding his teeth while gazing at Glory in dismay. "Do you think you can last three seconds once you cross this line?!"

"We're probably insane, but at least we're not a coward like you. How can we just stand here when Her Majesty is being outnumbered?" Omar's voice thundered, grabbing Jaime's collar. "Will we let her fight them all on her own?! Aren't you all ashamed?"

"The knight is right. We are all here knowing this will be our last." someone in the crowd yelled.

"Even a poor butler came to help Her Majesty! We, the knights, cannot just stay idle here with our trembling knees!"

The right side of my face twitched as they voiced out their determination one after another. By the sound of it, they don't really trust Fabian's capabilities. Well, I couldn't blame them, even though Fabian was holding a dark spear.

I glanced at Fabian, and his expression was dead. The head butler of our estate looked weak in one glance. If I was a stranger to him, I wouldn't even notice him as he already mastered the art of fusing with the background. So, he didn't feel intimidating unless someone truly knew this man and what he could do.

"Fabian..." I called awkwardly, but his eyes were already digging a hole in those people who only had good intentions. Just as I blinked, Fabian disappeared from his standpoint. I looked at the people behind the line on instinct and saw him already grabbing someone's neck.

"Who are you saying weak and pathetic?" he asked flatly, tilting his head to the side. "I rarely mind when people underestimate me, but if you truly care about Her Majesty, do not cross this line. If you do, I will kill you myself."

I pinched the space between my brows, but I didn't stop him. Fabian, although, could hurt them. He wasn't unreasonable. He wouldn't kill anyone, especially our allies, since we're already short in hand. Also, this was better to stop these stubborn people from meaninglessly sacrificing their lives.

"Store your energy and watch how Her Majesty protects every single one of your pathetic lives with hers. Etched this battle in your mind and remember it once you cross this line." Fabian let go of the man, dropping it on the ground before scanning everyone's faces.

"Because once you step out of this line, you had to fight even if it means sacrificing a limb or two."

Chapter 533 - [Bonus]Two Against One

There was silence in the crowd after Fabian's remarks. A few seconds passed, Fabian finally turned his back against them and faced our four opponents, who were clapping at his speech.

"Your Majesty, I will fight Acheron." I glanced at him at his suggestion, nodding as soon as I caught his solemn expression. "One thing why these people want to separate me from you is that they won't regenerate from an injury from Maleficent."

On instinct, my eyes feel on Acheron's bicep where Fabian stabbed him. The bleeding stopped, but the wound was still there. It was still just as big as earlier and it didn't heal in the slightest.

"Ahh... that is why." I nodded in understanding. Maleficent was created by the soul of vampires Fabian slewed in the past. So it was only logical that the Undead who sucked soul instead of blood were wary of Maleficent. No wonder Acheron was hurt with just a stab from Maleficent but didn't even flinch when I severed his limb.

Among these four, Acheron was the most troublesome, and even when I could fight him equally, it was more efficient if Fabian fought him.

"Fabian, we don't have much time. Just in case you can't finish them off in time..." I trailed off as I glanced at the torches from the distance. The rebels were getting closer. If worse came to worst, we could only force these people to a safe distance so they wouldn't wipe out our people.

"Don't worry, Your Majesty." I cast Fabian a side-eye, catching him holding maleficent with both his hands. "It's been a while since I was forced to do this. Fortunately, I only wore inexpensive clothing when I thought of going to the fort."

"That is your concern?" I chuckled weakly, swinging Lakresha until it made a swooshing sound. "Among us, you are the cleanest one here."

I felt him gaze at my side as if he only realized that now. "How dare they put you in such a state?"

"I was the one who tore my dress, Fabian."

"I will not forgive them."

Benedict scoffed as they only listened to our petty conversation. They didn't attack us, knowing carelessly stepping into our vicinity would mean death. Also, I was certain they were waiting for Acheron to recover.

"Then... be careful, Fabian." My eyes darkened as I gazed at Benedict and Maxine. The latter was the best fighter among the three, aside from Acheron. I couldn't let Fabian take two formidable opponents at once.

"You too, Your Majesty."

For a split second, silence enveloped us as I felt my fangs grow. It was painful as if my tooth was being extracted, but I ignored the pain. I couldn't even stop them from showing because of the emotions that were swelling up in my heart. It was as though the information of Zero and Stefan prowling the disastrous street of Minowa touched a special part of my brain.

I kept thinking about it and the more I did, the more the outcome of this situation grew blurry. I didn't want this uncertainty; it wasn't welcomed. We had to end these people before those two decided to appear. If they did in the middle of this battle, we would be in a hell of trouble for sure.

I reached for my earring that was dangling in my ear, took it off, and whispered. "Catharsis." It didn't take long when Catharsis overwhelmed my left hand with its aura that reeked with bloodlust.

Unlike Lakresha, Catharsis made me embrace the overwhelming emotions in my heart. It was forcing me to release everything: viciousness, bloodlust, death, blood, violence. Once I embraced those emotions as part of me, I felt relief as the side of my lips stretched into a sinister grin.

"Let's start."

As if a sound of a gong rang in the air, I disappeared from my standpoint and so were the four enemies. A loud, maniacal laugh slipped past my lips before the piercing sound of metals rang in my ear.

"Oh, Maxine, dear." My eyes glinted as I stopped her and George from going after Fabian, who was now clashing sword with Benedict and Acheron. "Do not disturb our dear butler. You're mine."

"What strong bloodlust," she muttered through gritted teeth as she grinned until her teeth showed. "I am honored to be in your presence, Your Majesty."

PANG!

Jaime held his breath as soon as those people outside the line clashed. This time, the gust of wind they created was stronger than it ever was. When Lilou was fighting all on her own, they were already overwhelmed. But now that more people joined the party, they all felt suffocated.

Some of them couldn't handle their aura even from that distance, and their knees gave way. Yet, they couldn't look away from their agile figure and quick movement that made them all appear like shadows. If not for the spark of their weapons every time they hit each other, they wouldn't be able to follow.

"This is insane." Jaime breathed out, barely keeping his knees from giving away. "These people... even that butler... how can... how can such people step foot in Minowa?"

Omar swallowed a mouthful of saliva, feeling his lips go cold. He wanted to ask the same. Minowa never produced such talented knights. These sorts of people with their caliber were only those people they heard in the capital. He had never seen this kind of fight, so it was overwhelming. Not just to him, but to everyone who was witnessing this fight.

"Two against one..." Glory's voice was low, holding his fist tightly. "I never felt so pathetic in my life." — he was a champion, or rather, he had always believed if he became a knight, even the military general would acknowledge his strength. But to think the empress and that mere butler could fight two powerful opponents each at once without making it look like they were at the disadvantage, everything Glory believed shattered like a fragile glass.

Just like him, everybody felt pathetic and useless in this fight. However, although these feelings were surging in their hearts, and their beliefs were turned to dust, it wasn't entirely bad. If anything, watching those two fights fueled their determination to fight.

It only solidified their resolve.

Suddenly, Glory saw someone coming at him at full speed. But instead of stepping back, he fought the urge to take a step back.

"Oy!" Omar yelled, but the stubborn Glory gritted his teeth.

"I am! Within the line!" he growled until his voice shook, trusting that no one could harm them for as long as they didn't cross the line Lilou created. Because if this person killed him, that only meant it was over for them. But he trusted Lilou and they all needed to believe in her, not because she was the empress, but because she was Lilou Roux.

PANG!

"Good job, Glory." Glory didn't even blink as Lilou appeared to deflect the sword away. He slowly shifted his eyes on her, staring at her back that felt like it was an impregnable wall that no one could infiltrate. With a scythe on her right and a large sword on her left, she didn't look back as she leaped forward towards her two opponents.

Everyone fixed their eyes on her and her now silver hair flowing back beautifully. She hadn't realized it yet, but Lilou's hair had turned argent; like a moon giving light in this seemingly eternal darkness.

"Your Majesty...." Jaime murmured in relief before he yelled to cheer Lilou. "Your Majesty! Minced them all alive!"

Chapter 534 - Stop Cheering!

"Put them in their place!"

"How dare they wield a sword in the presence of the empress?! Treason! Death is what they deserved!"

"Your Majesty! We believed in you!"

"Show no mercy!"

"Show them the power of the Empress of this empire!"

"The power of the empire!"

"Long live, Your Majesty, the Empress!"

After Jaime's cringe cheering, every one of them also cheered at the top of their lungs. I gritted my teeth while exchanging blows with Maxine and George. Both attack simultaneously while I defend and return the favor with equal strength.

"Tch. You have a lot of fans, Your Maje --"

Before Maxine could finish her sentence, I trusted Catharsis towards her, grinding against the blade of her weapon while swinging Lakresha at George at the same time. With my flexibility in fighting, I managed to make them fall several meters back.

I took a deep breath, grinding my teeth before I turned my head in the people's direction. "Stop cheering on me!" Did they think this was some sort of exhibition?! How could they cheer so enthusiastically when we could die any second?

My roaring echoed slightly as they instantly shut up. But I still ground my teeth as I set my eyes on Maxine and George once again. They were already preparing to attack once again. How could I focus on these two if their cheering kept distracting me?

"Haha! What a bunch of fools." Fabian landed five meters away from my vantage point, laughing gleefully as he glanced at the people. "Your Majesty, how can you break their hearts like that?"

"They distracting me."

"Oh, no, but that is better." He shrugged, tapping the other half of his Maleficent against his shoulder lightly. "It will help them raise their morale."

"Morale, tch." I spat out, clicking my tongue in irritation before noticing a habit Fabian never had before. I narrowed my eyes, seeing him grin when he saw my gaze lingered on his shoulder momentarily.

I didn't stay idle as I felt our opponents made a move once again. "Hey, cheer for me!" I yelled at our audience and then disappeared from my spot to meet Maxine and George halfway. Since I was looking out for Fabian's back, I knew he was also fighting Acheron and Benedict once again.

If not for the fact that they didn't sell their soul to become undead, this fight would be over. But that wasn't the case. Acheron and Benedict were fighting Fabian at their own discretion to avoid getting grazed by Maleficent. But Maxine and George didn't share the same hostility.

Even when I wounded them multiple times, they didn't even wince and healed quickly. Their regeneration was insane, but I had been testing something to find a weakness. I needed a bit more time to prove this theory in my head.

The cheering took some time to reach my ear, but it quickly volumed up again. Although it was distracting, I treated it as some background noises along with the high-pitched sound of metals clashing.

'Fabian had always had his way of fighting. He surely needed more recognition than just a butler,' I thought, slicing Maxine's belly with Catharsis while grazing George's robust arm. 'But our dear butler is the least ambitious of all.'

"Slice them in half, Your Majesty!"

My brows twitched as their misplaced enthusiasm still get into me, but I was starting to get used to it. We needed their noise and Fabian was right. It would raise their morale since the rebels were getting closer. I could already hear their faint shouts as well.

"Last one," I whispered before I launched an attack towards George after throwing Catharsis in Maxine to create a distance between us. "You come first, George."

His eyes widened as soon as I appeared below him, reaching out my empty hand to the side. "Fabian!!" as soon as I shouted, the empty hand that was initially holding Catharsis caught Maleficent. I winced at the pain under my grip as I felt like Maleficent was biting me, but that didn't hinder me from thrusting it up, piercing George's chin through his skull.

"George!!" Maxine was about to rush towards us before I killed George, but Catharsis was akin to a boomerang flying back at her back at full speed. When she deflected it, George was no more.

Blood poured on me as it trickled down to my face. I tossed Maleficent back in Fabian's direction before catching Catharsis. From my peripheral vision, I saw Fabian catch Maleficent. My palm throbbed as I gazed down at the lifeless George.

I didn't know how come Fabian could wield such a monstrous weapon. If I held onto it for a long time, my hand would wither. My respect towards Fabian just shot up through the roof.

'Fabian never taps his weapons against his shoulders. He doesn't hold Maleficent like that or would want to stain his clothes by doing so. If I didn't notice his hints, this battle will take longer,' I thought, watching Maxine gaze at the dead person lying in his own pool of blood. The cheering also stopped momentarily before their voices rang once again, chuffed that one was down.

"You...!" Maxine's tone was dead, not blinking her eyes as she set them on me. "... I will kill you and that butler."

"Sounds good to me." I shrugged, wiping the blood that was dropping from the apex of my nose. I felt like I bathe with blood, making me lick my lips only to scrunch my nose.

"Bitter," I commented in disgust. My taste in blood only wanted Sam, although blood itself sometimes made me crave. "Maxine, your regeneration seems to slow down."

My eyes fell on Maxine's tummy and arm. I had been wounding her in the same area along with every random attack so she wouldn't notice. My theory was correct. Although they heal quickly, if they get wounded in the same area repeatedly, it would take longer.

Her brows slightly raised, realizing that I figured out this fact. The side of my lips curled up into a smirk as my eyelids drooped, eyes glinting wickedly.

"Does this mean if I minced you repeatedly, there is a chance you will never regenerate? Hah! Shall we test it, Maxine?"

And without further ado, I bolted in her direction, without giving her time to grieve or think. This was where they were wrong.. For waking up the demon sleeping deep within me.

Chapter 535 - Art Of Absortion

Embracing the rotting darkness within me was something I had to accept slowly. But releasing it? It felt like I was having an orgasm. I was... relieved, in a way. Especially that I could use it against the people who truly deserved this darkness.

"Ugh!" Maxine ground her teeth when I sliced through her torso like she was a piece of paper. It felt nice, feeling how her flesh tore and the scent of her blood thickening in the air. The side of my lips stretched into a smile as Lakresha sliced through the side of her hips.

If she was any less normal, the wounds she inflicted so far were enough to keep her on the ground. But alas, despite the blood dripping from her, she still managed to hop several meters back from me. She was doing great, considering she was blind.

"Dear Maxine, is thirty seconds' rest enough for you?" I asked while tilting my head, keeping my consciousness because I might wreak havoc if I let this darkness consume me as well. My eyes fell on the ground she was standing on, seeing nothing but blood dripping onto it.

"Terrible," I spat out under my breath, raising my brows when I heard a loud shattering of concrete. I glanced in the direction of the sound, only to see Fabian holding a severed head while stepping on the body. He tossed the head like a ball, only to stab it with his Maleficent.

"Fabian, did you also get rusty at cleaning the house? It took you quite a while to finish Benedict." My eyes veered towards the enraged Acheron, landing in a distance.

"Your Majesty, please do not rub salt in my wound. I am simply experimenting with different theories in mind." Fabian wiped the side of his forehead with the back of his fist. "As expected, crushing their skull is still the best option."

"Already figured that out," I replied while setting my eyes back to the exhausted Maxine. "Her healing just slowed down, but it still heals eventually."

"During this time, I cannot help but think of that little girl, Charlie." I nodded at Fabian's remarks. If Charlotte was here, she could back us up from somewhere. Although it was presumptuous to think that Acheron and Maxine couldn't deflect her arrows, having her around would make things easier.

"Fabian, want to change opponents?" I proposed while staring at Maxine, feeling that her aura was evolving. "She smells... horrible. Like a rotting corpse or something."

"Such horrible scent, indeed."

I glanced at Acheron as he hung his head low. Both Acheron and Maxine felt like they were growing even stronger. I already felt this before we took a break, and only now I was certain it wasn't just my imagination. These two... had literally sold their soul to the devil.

It was hard to distinguish if they were still vampires or undead. But what I was certain of was that these two were monsters.

"Fabian," I called under my breath, gazing at George's corpse and seeing its shadow stretched towards Maxine.

"Yes, Your Majesty. It seems they had also learned the art of absorption." Fabian also gazed at Acheron, who was sipping in the air, sucking the shadow of the dead Benedict. "It's more like... a human Maleficent."

My brows rose as I glanced at Fabian. He seemed more displeased than alarmed, raising his sharp eyes in Acheron's direction. Although this information was shocking, I didn't question it, nor did it rattle me anymore. I had already expected the worst. This wasn't the type of worst I was thinking, but it was still the same.

So, I shifted my focus to Maxine, then to Acheron. "Deal with her, Fabian."

"Sure, Your Majesty. Be careful of him..." Fabian didn't argue with me, knowing me fighting Acheron was better because I was still a pureblood on the top of the blood chain. Even though

Maxine was also a noble vampire, Acheron had lived longer. In vampires, the longer they lived, the more powerful they become. Fabian's lifespan might've stretched this long because of his blood contract with Sam, but he was still a human.

That was why I was a better match against Acheron right now, and he could definitely handle Maxine. My grip around Lakresha and Catharsis tightened.

'If these two had grown this powerful... I'm terrified about Zero and Stefan's strength.' I took a deep breath and released it through my mouth. 'The last time I used darkfield was still unstable. I couldn't be careless in using it at this time since... I might actually die then. I still have a choice and I didn't have to resort to such things for now.'

"This will take a while and the rebels were near." I bent my knees with my eyes fixed on Acheron and his already buffed physique grew bigger. "Let's take them away from here."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

I didn't reply anymore as I sprung towards Acheron at full speed. Using Catharsis, I thrust it forward only to get blocked by him easily. My jaw instantly tightened as he deflected it easily. Not good. Despite the realization that he suddenly grew ten times stronger, I didn't stop launching attacks and picking up my speed.

Although Acheron could deflect my attack, he was still hopping back in the direction I was pushing him to. I had to take him to a distance away from those fools. If I didn't, those people would lose their lives without them knowing. The only reason I could protect them was that they were in the same spot. Once they stepped outside the line, I wouldn't guarantee their safety anymore.

"Your Majesty, you are surprisingly soft to those people." Acheron simpered as he blocked my incoming attack. "They will all die either way. You're just prolonging their sufferings."

"Shut up!" My yell was followed by our sword clashing, two swords against a sword and a scythe. "Acheron, be grateful that I will be the one ending you."

"I can't say the same."

Chapter 536 - Ugly

Meanwhile...

Fabian stared at Maxine curiously, sizing her up in silence. Although the latter couldn't see anymore, she was aware of how he gazed at her intensely.

"It is nice to fight you again, Fabian the Butler." She smirked, taking off her blindfold. "Remember this? My eyes still ached every time I remember you."

He stared at the deep scar from her temple across her nose bridge to the other side of her eye. It was a horrendous sight to behold and ruined her face, but he didn't show a bit of remorse in it despite that he was the one who gave that scar to her.

"I blinded you since you're already blinded," came out a calm explanation from him. "Sometimes, not seeing things can make you see clearer. But alas, it seemed the effect is opposite to you. I didn't consider that you will stay blind and took my generosity for granted."

"Tch." Maxine snickered. "Generosity? Sure, Butler. You are the most generous person in the world."

She swung her sword, producing a swooshing noise. If there was one person she would never forgive, it was Fabian. Not because she couldn't see anymore. Actually, the irony of losing her sight was she could see clearer — not literally, though. Her other senses all heightened and she would know if a person was just taking advantage of her.

"I didn't ask to see it, Butler." Her smirk faded as she took a deep breath. "This generosity of yours... I will return it!"

As soon as she dropped those words, Maxine disappeared from her vantage point, only to reappear in front of him. Although she was just as fast as a blink of the eye, Fabian's expression remained the same.

PANG!

He blocked her attack with ease. Maxine continuously attacked him while he just blocked each one of them, taking steps back at the same time. Her eyes were already closed, and yet her precision was impeccable. She wasn't leaving any openings for him, so he just let her release her pent-up frustration.

In the midst of their battle, Fabian's lips finally parted. "Are you in love with the previous emperor?" his question ceased her attacks as she hopped back just in case he attack her, but he didn't.

Instead, Fabian studied her curiously. Even before she could answer, he already guessed it. Maxine didn't just look up at Stefan. She was in love with him deeply and following his orders was her way of showing it. Surely, this thing called Love was giving Fabian the wrong impression.

To him, it was a terrible thing that made people stupid.

"Do you despise me because being blind helped you realize that he is merely using you?" he asked again, tilting his head to the side. She didn't need to answer, as he already knew this far, but he still asked to make her upset.

"Was your pain for letting yourself get used to his flowery words too painful that you cannot accept it? Since you're in denial, it must be." A sigh slipped past his lips, batting his eyes ever so tenderly. "I don't sympathize with you, but your decisions to let yourself get used to him whilst knowing the truth is... stupid."

"You don't know a thing, Butler." She scoffed, grinding her teeth while holding her swords tightly. "You know nothing... so don't talk as if you knew everything."

Fabian nodded, closed-lipped. "I know nothing and I don't know everything, but... I had been observing everything from the side. Hence, I can speak with certainty. How about you? Don't you regret turning yourself into a monster for someone who sees you as a pawn?"

Maxine hung her head low as her chest moved in and out heavily. A brief, bitter, and weak smile appeared on her lips, which no one had seen.

"Why would I regret it?" she whispered that only she could hear. "My king is innocent and kind. He just... he just loved the wrong person. If the third prince didn't wake up from his slumber, my king will be happy with her... and this place, this empire, that child's life, would be the place for my king's child. They had stolen everything from him. My poor king... he deserves none of this..."

Fabian finally reacted as he skipped several steps back until he reached the line. He simply glanced over his shoulder before keeping his eyes on Maxine.

"It is just a matter of time before the rebels come. Her Majesty and I will be a bit busy for a while. Can you handle them without dying immediately?" he asked in a solemn tone, waiting for just anyone to answer. To his surprise, it wasn't just one, but every one of them roared in unison.

"Leave it to us, Butler!"

"You and Her Majesty don't need to worry about us! We will watch each other's back!"

"We will make them regret marching in here!"

"Yes!! Just trust in us! We are already prepared to die!"

"It's only better to die fighting than die doing nothing...!"

The corner of Fabian's lips stretched into a smirk, then followed by a low chuckle. There wasn't even the slightest regret in their voice, although there was a mix of fear in it.

"Fools," he muttered, playing with Maleficent with his fingers. "Then don't die so easily as much as possible. The first one who dies is... ugly."

Their expression instantly turned blank as Fabian hopped away to clash with the terrifying monster named Maxine. Ugly? Was that something they would need to be concerned about? Their appearance? Their silence and confusion only stopped when Jaime shouted.

"I am not ugly!!" Everyone turned their dilated eyes on him, seeing him ground his teeth as he glowered at the approaching rebels. "I'm not the first to die in here. I will survive this night and live as a handsome man!"

"I will live a handsome life after this as well." Glory cracked his knuckles while glaring ahead. After that, every one of them shouted to stay 'handsome' and survive. As they do, Fabian chuckled whilst clashing, as those fools were so easy. And yet, he somehow didn't dislike them, nor did he think they were a burden to Lilou anymore.

"I don't know what she told them, but... Her Majesty always had her ways to touch the people's hearts."

Chapter 537 - Death Is His Only Salvation

Amid my intense battle with Acheron, the loud shouts of the people behind the line resonated in the air. They were shouting about being handsome. What ridiculous were those people spewing now? Couldn't they take this situation seriously?! Even Acheron chuckled while clashing sword with me.

"Aren't they silly, Your Majesty?" he commented calmly, blocking my attack while we're mid air as I didn't give him rest to stay on the ground. I noticed his movement slowed down in the air, so I had more advantage over here.

"I wonder what did the Butler say for them to speak such silly words in this situation?"

"You're too concerned about them!" I yelled through my gritted teeth, smashing Lakresha to cut his shoulder again, but to no avail. Even though I said I have had an advantage, it was just a tiny bit. Acheron was much faster and stronger than previously.

"This borrowed strength... the price of it is surely handsome," I muttered, landing on the ground before bolting towards him once again. "Are you not planning to live after today?"

He simpered as he met me halfway, holding his sword until it formed a cross. Another explosive wave of impact blew past my hair as we stopped with our weapons in between us.

"You are always quick to catch on, Your Majesty. I may lose my body, but... I will forever live." He pushed his sword towards me. This time, I was thrown away. I pierced Catharsis on the concrete to stop myself from flying away. My eyes fell on the long line I caused, but I didn't dwell on it since I looked up at the approaching Acheron.

"Forever live...? Are you saying Zero will absorb you too once you died?" I snickered, getting back up to my feet while pulling up Catharsis. "Surely, if your devotion towards Zero is not romance, I don't know what it's called."

"Loyalty, Your Majesty." I quirked a brow and tilted my head at his answer. "To me, he is the one true king that no one shall look down upon."

"Wow... it is, indeed, loyalty." I nodded, wanting to clap at his sentiments.

"You will not understand, for you are on the opposing side. For you, your husband is the one true emperor of the empire, but for me, he is nothing but someone who steals everything. A thief." His tone grew solemn, as he didn't look away from my gaze. "If you think I was foolish to believe in my chosen ruler, then it's the same for me. You are foolish, Your Majesty."

The side of my lips stretched into a slight smirk while listening to him. Acheron had a point. We were fighting because we believed in two different things, but where he was wrong was that I believed in something else.

"Wrong, Acheron. I don't think Sam is fit to be the king, neither did he think he is. I still believed Rufus is the best emperor we all needed," I corrected calmly as I secretly catch up to my breathing while thinking of how to defeat this man. "Even so, since my husband already sits on the throne, even I cannot do anything about it. The thing is... your king sees you all as pawns he can use, recycle, and dispose of if he so pleased. Sam is not like that. If being the sovereign means sacrificing your trusted people's lives, I don't think my husband wants the title."

I shook my head lightly, letting out a shallow breath. Not that I truly underestimated Acheron. I was certain he had a story of his own and had a deeper reason he followed Zero. However, whatever it was, it wasn't my problem. It was just a shame that such talent would be wasted because he chose someone selfish who only valued his own interest.

"If only Zero valued his people even just a tiny bit, I will respect him regardless of we are enemies or allies. But alas..." I paused as the ground shook, preparing myself to attack. "... he doesn't."

CLANG!

Once again, we clashed weapons. But this time, Acheron couldn't move his swords as I locked Lakresha's hook in his weapon's intersecting point and Catharsis on the other.

"But Acheron, I neither pity you nor sympathize with you." I smiled weakly as I relaxed, batting my eyes ever so slowly. "Rather, I respect your loyalty, devotion, and a strong sense of duty. Zero might be a piece of trash to me, but he might be someone even more important to you."

Acheron's eyes slightly dilated before the side of his lips stretched into a grin. "I can never truly hate you, Your Majesty."

"So do I."

Our weapons sparked as I pushed him while keeping his blades locked in between my weapons. In a beat, I jumped and kicked him in the abdomen, letting go of my weapons, and used my hand to pierce through his chest, grabbing his heart before unhesitatingly pulling it out.

Lakresha and Catharsis clang as they dropped to the ground. A second later, Acheron dropped to his knees, still barely alive while gazing at me. Although Fabian said to crush their heads, I noticed that although Acheron was protecting his head, he never left his chest unguarded.

It made me wonder why? Or rather, it made me wonder if this was akin to the core I had before. I was correct. His source of life wasn't in his head but in his heart. Zero was a smart fellow and had this annoying pattern of diverting attention. I was quite certain that Fabian would figure out about crushing the skull easily since these people worked like Maleficent.

So, if I put myself in Zero's shoes, I would change the location for those capable ones. Since Acheron was his people and not Maxine and the other two, he would give Acheron a higher chance of survival.

I gazed at the beating heart in my hand, gripping it securely but not crushing it. Instead, I looked at Acheron only to see him looking down with a subtle smile on his lips.

"His Majesty... is never evil," he muttered, gazing up at me. To my surprise, he looked at peace with that subtle smile on his face and those soft eyes... of a father talking about his son.

"He was a good boy who was a victim of his circumstance. Why I chose him is simply because... he too didn't deserve the life he was forced to lead by the Moriarty. You understand this, Your Majesty. Because you know what having a core feels like." My brows furrowed as I narrowed my eyes, seeing him channel his remaining life force to raise his sword.

"This is my atonement, my King."

Although Acheron's last attack wasn't quick, I couldn't react on time. The next thing I knew, his sword stabbed through the heart in my hand while I let it go.

"Acheron..." I whispered, watching him smile bitterly as he fell — face first. I pressed my lips into a thin line, balling my hand into a fist as the end of this battle left a bitter taste in my mouth.

This... was what war was like. We all had our reasons, story, and something we were fighting for. For me, it was my son and my people. But to Acheron, who seemed he saw Zero as his son, was his act of atonement for not being able to save a child from walking down the path of wickedness.

"A core, huh?" I murmured, chuckling bitterly as I sauntered towards Acheron to pick up my weapons. "Even if I understand what it felt like having a core, you and I know it is already too late for Zero, Acheron."

The deafening yelling and clashing of the sword suddenly rang behind me as the rebels seemed they had finally arrived. I closed my eyes slightly, standing up, then turned my back against Acheron.

"Death.... is his only salvation."

Chapter 538 - Handsome Gentlemen

No one was born evil. I understood that fact back in the palace years ago. At first, I thought the La Crox were royals who only indulged in violence. But I was wrong. The more I got to know them, the more my heart ached for them.

They weren't born evil, but they were raised to be monsters who shall slay anyone who stood in their way. They were taught not to trust each other, even when they were siblings. Instead, they were taught to see each other as competition.

For what?

For Power.

Dominance.

Authority.

I couldn't truly blame Stefan, Hanz, Alphonse, and Alistair for what they had done. I wasn't saying they were hundred percent innocent, but they were also victims of power and greed. What they had done was unforgivable and even if their reasons were good, their methods were wrong.

Of course, the La Crox's wasn't the only ones who lead this kind of life. I was certain there were other people: royals and nobles, who had to follow this strict rule. That was the reason Sam didn't want to restrict our son, letting him live and have his own identity.

Although Law could be a little spoiled — a little too spoiled, he was a wonderful child, overall. We weren't perfect parents, but we were doing our best to lead him into a better path.

That was why I understood Acheron because I now had a son. As I said, I didn't understand the complete story of Acheron and Zero, but I sort of got the gist of their story. Acheron, although strong, wouldn't stand a chance against a pureblood. I heard the Moriarty was just as strong as the La Crox, so even if he rebelled to save a pitiful prince, they would just lose both their lives.

As a parent, I was certain Acheron just did what he thought best for Zero at that time. But... the latter had grown into a vicious man. Following him and his orders were not his way to change the young prince, now king. It was his act of atonement since Acheron must've known this was the only thing he could do. Or he felt responsible for what Zero had become.

There was no going back. That was the life of pureblood and royalty.

"Your Majesty, are you alright?"

Suddenly, Fabian landed beside me as I walked back in the direction of the battle. Acheron and I fought at a respectful distance and I only realized that after our battle.

"Did you finish Maxine?" I asked, without looking away at the battle ahead.

"Yes."

I nodded before glancing at him. "You look sad, Fabi." Pointing out what was not obvious on the surface.

"I am not. More like I am wondering. " He looked ahead, taking our precious time as our people were battling fiercely, leaving me in awe as they looked at each other's back.

"About?"

"Wondering about if there is a better resolution than a war."

I stopped upon hearing his remarks, pivoting on my heel to face him. "What?"

"You looked surprised, Your Majesty."

"Obviously. A peaceful resolution in this is the least I expect from you." I raised my brows and shrugged. Could he blame me? Fabian was never the type to change his mind in this situation. Even though I slightly wavered after ending Acheron, I steeled my heart. Because if I wavered, it would risk everyone's lives.

"Did Maxine somehow change your mind?" I asked cautiously.

Fabian let out a shallow breath as he resumed his stride. "No. Her reason to fight is complicated but somehow understandable. She loved the previous emperor, that even when she sees things clearly, it was already too late for her to change her heart."

I nodded, listening to him while I walked beside him. Battling Acheron was tiring, so I needed a quick break before helping those fools who were shouting they were handsome.

"Acheron's reasoning isn't that complicated, but it's deep," I added meekly.

"I respect their reasons, however ridiculous it is. The reason I was wondering about a better resolution is that those they sent here fought with their lives and heart. Although I think her reasoning is foolish, I respect her candidness." Fabian paused as I somehow guessed his point. "But those who sent them... don't shred the slightest respect to those people. They were nothing but pawns and even after death, they would use them."

"It makes my blood boil, Your Majesty," he added, making me glance at Fabian. His expression remained aloof, but I could feel this dangerous aura exuding from within him.

"Fabian, didn't you say you were wondering about a peaceful resolution in this situation? Your aura tells me otherwise."

Fabian cast me a side-eye. "Your Majesty, I said I was thinking of a better resolution, not peaceful. An efficient way to end Zero and Stefan — if he is also here."

"If we're not short in hand, I will ask you to find them." I nodded as I told Catharsis to return to its earring form, hooking it in my ear. "Apparently, if you go now, we don't know when they will appear. Would they appear together? Or just one? Don't forget that those four are not just the only capable people they had. Lena, Luther, Mortas, and many more."

"If I didn't save the half of the people in Minowa, we can just flee on our own. But, I can't turn my back on them now," I added, shifting Lakresha to be a thin sword. "They were my people, Fabian. I hadn't done my duties as an empress, but as a knight, I want to adhere to my oath."

"I understand, Your Majesty."

I glanced at Fabian but said nothing. In a beat, we both dashed forward, since it would be dangerous for our people if they get even more overwhelmed by the rebels.

CLANG!

Glory blocked the attack that was coming at the knight from three people at once. The slightly rattled man gazed at him, almost relieved when he saw Glory offered his hand to help him up.

"Glo!"

Suddenly, from a distance, Omar yelled as someone was trying to attack Glory from behind. However, he couldn't go and save him since he was battling three rebels at the same time as well. Omar ground his teeth, blocking the three swords before glancing in Glory's direction again.

To his relief, who he saw was someone that fueled their desire to fight. Lilou.

Lilou didn't wield her sword. Instead, she just planted her hand on the rebel's shoulder as if he was her friend.

"Hey, a sneak attack is smart, but how can you all try to hurt these handsome gentlemen?" She cocked her head to the side before glancing at Glory and smiling. "What will you do if you hurt their handsome faces?"

Chapter 539 - The Promise She Made

I had almost gone used to the sounds of deafening shouts and clashing of metals as everyone roared at the top of their lungs. Even I yelled as I faced multiple rebels, helping anyone I could. With Fabian and me joining the battle, our people gained their momentum, fighting fiercely.

No guilt or remorse at the deaths under our belt. No mercy each time we swung our weapons. We didn't have the leisure to waver because we were all aware entertaining those emotions would not only cost us our lives but also the lives behind that gate.

Although we inflicted minimal casualties, we were gaining the upper hand. And yet, no one was happy about it. The pilings of bodies on the ground, voices once being heard along with the metals would fade in a second, and blood coloring us... this was no doubt a painful, bloody war.

A war no one could hide or run from; a night full of uncertainty whilst holding our breaths of whose voice would fade the next second.

This was the sound of war.

And to think the night had just begun...

I felt restless myself — breathless, even.

"Your Majesty!" I heard Omar yell, and I looked back, only to see Glory slaying a rebel attacking me from behind. I glanced at Glory and nodded, but I didn't have the time to thank him as we blocked the other incoming attacks.

"Damn it!" I roared through my gritted teeth, deflecting five swords all at once. "Fabian!"

Just as I pushed the five men, Fabian suddenly appeared on their back, eyes glinting as he slashed their backs in one swing. Even our dear butler, whose eyes were often barely seen with his usual bright smile, couldn't smile anymore.

As soon as he stood before me, he glanced down at the new corpses between us. My grip tightened, nodding at him as I faced more rebels coming at us. These people weren't as strong as those four we faced earlier, but because of their numbers, they were troublesome.

"Wipeout all these rebels!" I heard Jaime yell from somewhere, but instantly shut up when a burning arrow landed near my foot. I stepped on the fire to diminish it. These several arrows slightly put a pause for everyone, while some didn't stop fighting.

We were all battling at close combat since no one could shoot an arrow aside from me. Also, because the bows and arrows we had were limited in numbers. If the rebels had great archers, our casualties would be grave, especially since they were burning arrows.

They would set us all on fire.

"Fabian, stop all the arrows and never let a single one land in here," I ordered in a low tone before taking advantage of this brief silence on the battlefield. "Everyone! Don't be afraid! Continue fighting! We won't let those arrows burn us!"

"Yess!!!"

I nodded, satisfied at the level of trust these people were giving me. I glanced at Fabian. He just nodded once before he jumped in the air, swinging his spear that instantly killed the fire at the tip of the arrow. The arrows clang on the ground, giving relief to those who witnessed him stop multiple arrows and making them look powerless.

"Everyone! Attack!"

"Yaaaah!!!"

Everyone was quick to fight once again, knowing Fabian would stop those arrows that startled us. Hence, the fight resumed as the deafening noises filled the air once again. Meanwhile, I walked back to the estate to grab the bows and arrows we brought near the gates.

As soon as I picked them all up, I jumped and landed at the top of the wall where the gate was attached. From this vantage point, I could see everything. The countless rebels running to join the battle, our people fighting, looting weapons from the diseases, Fabian standing on the front line, and some who were dragging those injured ones on our side to safety, since they could no longer fight.

The sight of it was... horrible. It made my stomach churn.

Although we were gaining the upper hand with minimal casualties, one injury or death meant a minus on our side. Meanwhile, ten deaths on the rebels meant nothing. Their numbers on the battlefield were just growing as well. If this continued like this, we would all reach a point of exhaustion and get killed by our enemies.

I took three arrows at the same time, placing them on the bow, pulling them back with the string. I had to reduce the number of entering the battlefield.

I released the arrows and aimed at the rebels with precision. Each bow pierced through their heads and I didn't miss a single one. Each arrow was precious right now. If I had fifty, that means fifty deaths. I didn't even bat an eye at that number of lives I had to take.

There was no right or wrong, immoral or ethical in here. We were all fighting for what we believed, for the things we wanted to protect, for our lives.

"Men! For our sons! Families! Friends! For the lives that had been lost! For the voices, we can no longer hear! No remorse in those who wanted to harm them!" I roared my lungs out, followed by my people's growls, before taking out more arrows to take more lives.

"Give your all!" I took a deep breath, grinding my teeth. "Show no mercy!!"

My hands had long been soiled and here I was, tainting them red and black even more.

But I had no guilt nor regret because I also had people to protect.

A tale I wanted to tell.

A family to go home to.

A life to return to.

And we... would all return to our families, to our lives; that was what I promised to these people and I would fulfill it as much as possible. For sure... we would all live a handsome life once this all ended.

That, I promised. To Law, to Sam, to the families and friends waiting and praying for these men to return to them.

Again, I released the arrows with my eyes blazing with determination. This heaviness in my heart... I would carry it all to hell.. Until then... I would be the devil born to deliver all these people to where we all belong first.

Chapter 540 - The Last Arrow

'This is the last one,' I thought, but that didn't hinder me from releasing the single arrow that was left in me. So far, I kept them busy as they fended off the arrows coming at them. Still, that barely made the enemies slow down. Just as I was about to toss the bow aside and join the battle once again, I gazed down at the person below.

Even though we were all dirty, I could tell he was a commoner at a glance. My eyes landed on his wrapped shoulder, but his injury was minimal based on the blood that was leaking from his wound.

"Your Majesty!" he was panting, hugging a few arrows like how a child embraced their toy. "I picked up some arrows for Her Majesty!"

My jaw tightened as I motioned my fingers up. "Throw some up here."

"Yes!" he didn't idle as he immediately toss three up, which I caught. Without a second hesitation, I pulled three arrows with the string and shot at each rebel, sneaking up behind Jaime. The latter glanced in my direction, but I ignored it and caught another two to shoot more people.

We continued with this routine and noticed some who couldn't lift their weapons, pluck the arrow from those I shot. I narrowed my eyes, seeing at least three people doing the same thing while others back them up. This slightly brought a subtle smile to my lips, an irony in this situation.

When they collected a considerable amount of arrows, they all rushed in my direction with the arrows they had collected. As they did, they didn't look back, trusting those who were protecting them. With their determination, I kept shooting arrows as I had an 'unlimited supply.'

"Your Majesty!" the three who brought the used arrows dropped them near the one who thought of this idea, handing him a handful of arrows which he could toss to me.

"Take a rest," I said, releasing three more arrows and downing three people at once. "You're doing a good job."

I felt their beam, but I had to focus on the battlefield. So far, we held equal ground against the rebels. Fabian was doing a good job of stopping the arrows and was now holding the front line. Letting him stand in front helped me reduce the rebels from flocking the battlefield and overwhelming our people. But because of their numbers, like ants, he couldn't stop all of them.

If Fabian and I wanted to, we could obviously fight these people. However, I knew he was conserving his energy as much as possible. Both he and I couldn't use all our energy in here because Zero wasn't still here. Although I wasn't sure if Stefan was also here, we had to think he was already in here.

Whatever they were doing, I didn't care now. I would fight them to death. This time, for sure, we would put an end to the matters of the past.

"Fabian!" I shouted while in a stance to release the arrow. He didn't look back but instead, dash towards the rebels. As he did so, I shot arrows at those rebels coming from his side.

'The main problem in here is not the rebels coming...' my eyes sharpened as I let go of the arrows. 'The most troublesome of all were those shooting burning arrows from a distance.'

BOOM!

A powerful gust of wind blew past me and even threw away other people near him as Fabian deflected all the attacks that surrounded him. Even from this distance, I shivered at the killing intent emanating from our dear butler as he showed no mercy.

In a blink of an eye, a river of red flooded his feet as he dash forth. Fabian then disappeared, reappearing above those archers to strike them. Time seemed to stop over there as Fabian stood in the middle of the rebel's base. He looked cool as he lifted his chin, showing no remorse in slashing the archers.

"This is a war," I muttered, shooting at them, which brought them back to reality. Those people defending the estate filled the air with their roars, advancing this time. Fabian's action raised their morale.

"We're done defending," I continued, catching more arrows with one hand. "Time to attack, Fabian."

As I said those words, I shot the arrows. The other three who were collecting the arrows were about to rush back to the battlefield but stopped when I spoke.

"That is enough! Focus on helping those injured people. Take them back inside so they would get treated," I ordered while shooting the arrow.

"But Your Majesty!"

"No buts! I promised everyone... and their families that they would return!" I released the arrow as my tone grew solemn and firm. "Their injuries might be grave and they might not survive, but I want them to spend their last moments with their love ones."

I didn't know if this was right or wrong, but that was what I see fit. Returning their corpse to the family and giving a chance to those who were accepting the pearly gates of heaven or the scorching door of hell was what I see fit. Their families deserved to hold a funeral and bury their bodies instead of weeping for an empty grave.

"Yes, Your Majesty!"

As I was shooting the remaining arrows, the three men who were collecting them checked those people on the battleground. They prioritized those with grave injuries whom we thought were already dead.

"Last one," I said, pulling this last arrow while my eyes scanned who to shoot. Right now, with Fabian leading them, we were overwhelming the rebels. Despite their numbers, they were falling back.

"This is a good sign..." I trailed off as my eyes suddenly dilated, holding my breath as my entire body shook. I couldn't release the arrow as I just stood in here, frozen. The battle was still ongoing, but I caught Fabian also pause while being surrounded. Others wouldn't notice immediately, but the two of us instantly felt the sense of dread and the danger that suddenly arose.

This aura...

I slowly looked up, clenching my teeth as the light from the moon slowly reduced. A dark shroud enveloped half of Minowa.

"Darkfield..." I muttered, and I knew this darkfield was strong, impregnable, and dangerous to be in it. The tide had turned.

"Everyone! Fall back right this instance!" I shouted through my gritted teeth.