

The Duke 831

Chapter 831 Who could've died

The soldiers near Heliot's vicinity and also the ones in the front line halted. Their eyes went wide, staring blankly in Heliot's direction and the debris falling on the ground. Never once in their career had they witnessed someone stop Heliot's sand dragon. Therefore, the sudden pause and shock.

If the person who stopped Heliot's sand dragon was an enemy, then this person was a formidable opponent. Which also meant they would be held back from advancing.

Silence descended in the area, all eyes on Heliot and the thick smoke before him. The first thing they saw through the thick fog of dust was the establishment. Everyone subconsciously held their breaths, anticipating who was the person who stopped Heliot's rampage.

As the smoke gradually cleared up, Heliot narrowed his eyes. Unlike his soldiers, whose guards were all up whilst staring in the other person's direction with hostility, Heliot maintained his calm mien. Heliot studied the silhouette behind the thick fog until he recognized that familiar figure.

"What do you think you're doing?" asked Heliot sternly, not pleased with the interruption this person caused. "Claude?"

Claude drew a deep breath, stretching his arm while wincing. Soon, the fog that was surrounding him was thin enough to reveal his face.

"Ugh... I want to ask the same, but then again, I realized we're at war. So wreaking havoc wasn't surprising. Claude grumbled, moving his shoulder in a circular motion. "Goodness. Whatever that was, it's surely strong. I thought I'd lose my limb trying to block it."

'Lose a limb?' Heliot repeated in his head, raising his brows at that remark.

He assessed Claude, and despite that Claude was displaying a pained countenance, Heliot knew that the injury wasn't as grave as Claude claimed. After all, Heliot felt the strength this young man had displayed to stop his sand dragon, and Heliot nearly inflicted injuries, if not for his quick reaction to sacrifice his sand dragon.

"State your purpose, Your Highness." Heliot threw his thoughts at the back of his head, gazing at Claude solemnly. "As far as I remember, we are in an alliance. I do not want to jump to a conclusion yet. Therefore, I would appreciate it if you state your reason for standing in my way." Claude scrunched his face slightly, looking at Heliot from up and down.

"Goodness... I rushed in here and didn't even take a breath. But now, I am under suspicion - what a life!" A frown turned up on his face. "How do I say this... hmm... I need your help?"

"Help?"

"Uh-huh!" Claude breathed out heavily, turning on his heel to face the establishment. "There were many things we found out in the capital, Prince. You might not care about this land since it is not the land of Karo, but my future wife had already decided.

"Future wife?" whispered Heliot, wondering who could be the person Claude was talking about, only to realize there was only one lady Claude fancied in the strangest way. But that woman was

already married; Heliot already accepted that he would never figure out how this setup with Samael, Lilou, and Claude as it seemed they already deemed Claude's 'feelings' as normal.

"Prince Heliot." Heliot snapped his eyes when Claude called. "I will only say this once, so you have to listen. We don't have much time."

Ileliot furrowed his brows, staring at Claude's back as the latter waited for the fog to clear up. As they did so, Claude summarized everything that had happened in the Capital of Spade. The more Ileliot listened to this sickening story that was almost unthinkable to believe, the more he couldn't pinpoint what to feel about it.

As someone who also ruled the land and pledged to protect the people, Heliot could never understand Zero's intention. It was obvious, despite that, how could such a person be so heartless as to sacrifice the entire nation for whatever reason?

It was sickening, unspeakable, and wicked.

"That is why... you shouldn't let your emotions and goals take charge, Claude continued, marching toward the establishment. "Unleashing such destructive power is not hard. To be fair, it was easy. We can just wreak havoc and mess everything up. However, would we be able to lift our chin proudly, knowing we had massacred the innocents?"

Claude's expression turned solemn, opening the door of the establishment. There was no light inside and the only light outside was the torches from the cavaliers in the area. But Claude didn't need light to see in the dark. None of them needed that since they were originally creatures of the night.

His eyes shone crimson red, gazing at the people cramped inside the establishment. Two children, hugging each other. Tears flooded their pale face that was dominated by nothing but dread. Their little bodies were trembling in fear, turning their heads at the person standing by the door.

"We are not Quentin," Claude breathed out, his voice shaking as he tried to suppress his anger. "Turning a blind eye to these people... is just as wicked as what he had done to them."

Claude stepped inside the establishment, watching the two children hug each other tightly. Their bodies trembled violently at the sound of his footsteps. Seeing their reaction, Claude felt a pang in his chest.

"Truly despicable, whispered Claude to himself, squatting down as he was several feet from the children. Their muffled whimpers caressed his ears, making him sigh once more.

"I won't hurt you," Claude reassured in the gentlest tone he could speak. "I'm sorry if that surprised you, but you're safe now!" His lips stretched into a subtle smile, nodding at them reassuringly. However, reluctance still shone in their eyes, which was understandable. These children, despite barely knowing what was going on, were aware that they had no one to rely on. If their king could sacrifice them, of course, they couldn't simply trust others.

Meanwhile, Heliot also followed Claude and stood by the door. His eyes fell on Claude's figure, who was squatting down. He moved his gaze over Claude, and his heart clenched the moment he caught two pitiful children, who could've died with his monstrous attack.

"Quentin..." Ileliot breathed out a jagged breath, unable to discern which emotion was dominant in his heart. But for sure, these feelings weren't anything pleasant at all.

Chapter 832 Change of plans

Many things hovered in Heliot's head, trying to understand what was going on inside Zero's head to do such a vile thing. However, he quickly realized there was no point in trying to understand Zero's mind. That man didn't need understanding, but retribution.

"It's alright." Heliot watched Claude croon, offering his hand to the children who nearly got crushed by Heliot's destructive attacks. "I'm not saying you should trust me immediately, but this place is not safe. It's barely holding on."

Claude nodded reassuringly, smiling at the children. The children were still shaking uncontrollably, clutching each other tightly. They stared at Claude's kind expression before casting each other a look.

Heliot didn't stay long when he saw that the fear in the children's eyes waned. He wasn't a sentimental man who would understand many emotions. But he certainly knew that these children would reach their hands out to Claude; they would die either way whether they take a leap of faith or cower in that corner.

As Heliot stepped outside, he raised a finger and flicked it slightly. That minor gesture was enough to send a message to the cavaliers who stopped to assist him. They nodded at Heliot, shouting to pass the message to stop from advancing.

Heliot's gesture was a sign that there was a change of plans. They might not be able to stop those who went ahead to create a path for the rest of the troop. However, that was an easy fix. Whatever announcement Heliot had, they could just catch up to those in the front line to relay the change of plan.

Heliot watched his men yell and gallop to pass the message to the army breaching the border. Minutes later, he glanced over his shoulder as Claude stepped out with a child in his arm, and the two children walking on either side of him. Heliot turned around ever so slowly, eyes falling on the infant in Claude's eyes.

"These kids kept their little sister in a closet to keep her safe," explained Claude seeing that Heliot was staring at the infant. "It's a surprise it was sleeping soundlessly and isn't making a sound."

'It's not sleeping!' corrected Heliot inwardly, but gazing up at Claude, he figured the latter already knew that. Claude was aware this infant was infected, but it just so happened that it wasn't capable to fight like the rest of the undead. Hence, the infant was just 'sleeping' "There were still many people in the Spade Kingdom who were like them, Prince," Claude continued solemnly, holding Heliot's gaze. "Those undeads we were fighting... they were simply victims of the mad king. Sir Knight Rufus is already cleansing them, but since he is the only person who could use the power of light, it would take some time.

"The reason I am saying this is because the undeads weren't our enemy, Prince Heliot. Zero was. The only one," he added as his expression turned firm. "I am not here to judge or claim I am immaculate. I killed the undead without a second hesitation. Countless of them shed blood under my sword. What I am saying is if you can knock them out. Don't kill them until Sir Knight could get to them or the Divine Order steps foot in this land"

"And give priority to people like them!" Claude gazed down at the children and smiled subtly. "I already found a few of them, but since I have to get to you as soon as possible, I told them to stay safe in this place."

Claude lifted his eyes to Heliot. "Can you take this task, Prince? I am aware that you are not obliged to do this much for this country, but I would really appreciate it if you can help us out."

"You don't plan on coming with us?" Heliot inquired, sensing that Claude didn't have any intentions of staying with them.

"There's another person I must talk to," Claude responded without a second hesitation. "The problems in this country aren't as easy as they appeared on the surface. I have to bring the Divine Orders into this place as soon as possible since we cannot stay inside this hell for long." Some questions instantly rose in Heliot's mind upon hearing Claude's last remarks. However, he didn't raise any of them. Heliot was sharp enough to grasp what Claude meant by that. Heliot gazed up at the darkness covering the sky that stretched to a distance even Heliot's sharp eyes couldn't reach.

Heliot had always known there was something wrong with these powers. It was one of the main fuel why he pushed himself to breach the border quickly and also the reason he resorted to such a destructive yet easy method.

They might not be sure of the exact reason how and why this darkness existed, but what they were certain of was that they have to get out of there as soon as possible.

When Heliot set his eyes back on Claude, his eyes sharpened.

"If meeting King Stefan and the Divine Bearers is your top priority, then I won't stop you. This land may not be mine and these people weren't the people I pledged to protect. However..." his gaze fell on the children, hiding behind Claude upon Heliot's gaze. "... I am not Quentin. I do not intend to cause more harm to the innocent. You said it yourself, our enemy is Quentin, not these people."

Heliot cast the nearest knight a look, and the latter bowed. The knight jogged toward Claude's side.

"I will ask my men to rescue as many survivors as they can," Heliot continued, making Claude sigh in relief. The latter then gazed down at the children who clutched the hem of his clothes even tighter.

"It's fine!" Claude smiled reassuringly. "They will keep you safe from hereon. Close your eyes until you feel you're safe." Reluctance shone in the children's eyes, but eventually trusted the big brother who helped them. In the end, the children reluctantly followed the knight after Claude passed the infant to the knight. But before they could leave, Claude planted his hand on the knight's shoulder. Claude leaned closer to the knight and whispered in his ear. "Knock them out. It's best for the both of them."

Chapter 833 Kraken

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"Knock them out. It's best for the both of them."

The knight gazed at Claude in surprise as the latter drew his head back. Seeing the resolve in Claude's eyes, the knight nodded without a word. With that being said, the knight ushered the

children to the other soldiers to ride with them. But just as they reached the chariot, the other knight pressed something on the children's shoulder, knocking them out as quietly as possible. Claude rocked his head as the knights glanced back in his direction before Claude set his eyes back on Ileliot. Claude marched in Ileliot's direction, stopping several steps from the latter.

Since Claude would separate ways with them, he instructed Heliot of the places he was certain there were survivors and then the safest mansion on the outskirts of the capital. Heliot listened carefully to the instruction, gazing in a particular direction while nodding.

"Very well - ahem!" Claude cleared his throat, assessing Heliot's side profile. "Good luck on your mission."

Heliot cast Claude an indifferent side eye, only to see the latter wave dismissively. As Claude walked away leisurely before he started skipping, Heliot's attention shifted to the building before them. His eyes narrowed, catching little cracks in the wall.

The cracks crawled and gradually picked up its pace. In a blink of an eye, the entire establishment erupted into smithereens.

"Ahh..." Heliot protected himself from the debris by turning them into sand, creating thicker smoke of dust.

Heliot had been wondering how Claude stopped the impact of their abrupt clash. Even though Heliot was aware Claude stopped Heliot's attack with brute force, there was still an after-effect of the impact. This establishment wouldn't survive the impact as it was the nearest to them. The establishments and houses were ruined in the area, losing their roofs or showing clear effects of the impact.

But this house, for some reason, wasn't affected. Now, Heliot understood that wasn't the case.

"What a convenient ability," he murmured, realizing it wasn't that the establishment where the children hid wasn't affected. In fact, it inflicted the damages that was expected. The only reason it didn't give in immediately was that Claude stopped its time.

From Ileliot's understanding, Claude didn't stop the general time since everyone didn't notice. However, he stopped or probably extended the life expectancy of the establishment. No wonder Heliot felt this strange aura when he went to check inside previously. It was just faint, and he didn't have the time to dwell on it.

"A convenient ability matched with a quick thinking... that young man is surely admirable." Heliot turned on his heel, telling himself, admiring Claude's ability and how quickly the latter's thinking wasn't their priority.

Right now, Heliot had met another agenda, and that was to evacuate and rescue all the survivors. It was a shame he couldn't end Zero himself, but more than his opinion, he couldn't just turn his back on the people of Spade. He wasn't his subject, but these pitiful citizens were simply victims of being born in a land ruled by a cruel king.

Heliot stepped out of the thick fog and was welcomed by several units, who were waiting for his orders. He scanned the knights' determined faces, drawing a deep breath before his lips parted, briefing them on the important details and giving out his royal orders.

Meanwhile, near the seacoast of the Spade Kingdom, warships could be seen from the edge of the land. One could tell there was also a battle that was going on despite that Claude could barely see the ships. They were as tiny as ants from his vantage point, but the smoke billowing in the night sky was an enough indicator of a fierce battle.

Sparks were also flying, creating distant explosions from the cannons and causing large waves. Just looking at it made Claude a little nauseous as he wasn't that fond of sea travel that much. Good thing they traveled with a small group and thus, they took the route on land instead of going via ship.

"Amazing..." Claude breathed out, narrowing his eyes.

His gaze caught the proud flag of the Heart's Kingdom fluttering wildly on top of the several warships. If Claude's calculation was correct, Stefan shouldn't have advanced this fast with the warships that welcomed them from the Spade Kingdom.

However, considering most of the important limbs of Zero were in the Capital, it wasn't that surprising. Even so, it was still amazing. After all, whoever was in charge of these warships was a capable individual. It was the same with the person defending the cast border. They managed to force Heliot to exert more effort to breach the border, after all.

"Should I wait?" Claude wondered to himself, looking around the coast if there were more troops. There was no one but himself. "Considering the plan was to mislead Quentin and force half of his sea warriors into the other fort, they'd probably realized late that the arrival place is this one and not the other one"

Claude rocked his head in understanding, assuming that those who were expecting Stefan's ships on the other fort didn't realize this was where Stefan's people would arrive. If those soldiers realized this, they would surely gallop their way into this place to stop Stefan from stepping foot in this land.

"That's right. There's no way Stefan would just leave the fort unguarded. He must've had other plans..." just as those remarks rolled out of Claude's lips, his breath hitched as his pupils went wide. His heart suddenly thudded against his ribcage, making it skip a beat for a moment. There, on the sea, appeared gigantic tentacles from the underground. It appeared so suddenly that some ships split in half. Compare to the tiny size of the ships that appeared from Claude's vantage point, those tentacles looked monstrous.

"Kraken..." whispered Claude, holding his breath as a warship from the Heart's Kingdom got wrecked in one swift move. It reminded him of those dark threads in the Colosseum, but this one was twice bigger than those. "... just what sort of sorcery did that man do to deploy all sorts of things?"

Just then, Claude realized that Zero might've known the diversion Stefan planned, and thus, he prepared such a monstrous and legendary creature to fight them. This wouldn't be an easy match... that was for sure.

Chapter 834 A legendary creature he was so fond once

Meanwhile, inside the naval warships in the ocean, soldiers from the Heart's Kingdom invaded the other ships. Cannon flew everywhere, giving sparks in the dark sky like stars in the night. The cries of war and the clash of metals resounded in the air.

With the Divine Order and Stefan - the king of the Heart's Kingdom - at the helm of this war, they quickly took the upper hand. Their enemies were capable elite knights; they were knights trained to battle in the ocean. Thus, even without any proper leader leading them, they still managed to hold off Stefan's forces. But not enough to stop them from advancing.

Stefan and the Divine Order destroyed multiple warships already whilst inflicting minor casualties. Even though this wasn't the type of war they were used to, they still dominated their enemies until the shore of the Land of Spade was in sight.

However, just as they thought their goals were within their reach, the war took an abrupt pause. Both forces from the Spade and the Heart's Kingdom stopped fighting as the surface they were standing on shook violently. Some lost their balance and fell, sliding as the ship tilted. Others managed to grab onto anything to keep themselves from falling.

Stefan, who was still on the main ship of the Heart's Kingdom, grabbed onto the deck. His eyes snapped open at the bloodcurdling growl that resonated in the air. He still hadn't known what caused the violent tremors and the cause of the splash of water that quickly disguised itself as rain, but his gut feeling already told him whatever it was meant trouble.

"What the hell is that?" Stefan heard a soldier's shaking voice after a moment, making Stefan lift his head.

What Stefan first saw was a gigantic thing wiggling from underneath the water to the sky. It took him a few seconds to realize they were monstrous tentacles that reached past the ship's mast, piercing the dark sky.

His heart instantly pounded against his chest and for a moment, that was all Stefan heard echoing in his ears.

"A Kraken...?" he blurted out under his breath, recalling this famous fable he only heard when he was a child.

Where did he read it again?

"Right..." he whispered as he remembered where he first heard of such a creature. "... from Ameria."

Ameria Grimsbanne.

Ameria was Samael, Lucia, and Dyrroth's biological mother. She was also the Queen of the Heart's Kingdom and the Queen Mother of all the King's children. She was legally every La Crox's mother even if she wasn't the one who birthed them.

Ameria was a good woman even though Stefan barely have memories with her. One particular memory Stefan could remember was when Ameria would enthusiastically tell them stories. For Stefan, it was the reason Samael chose to go around as a vagabond and enjoyed a life full of adventures. Ameria liked adventures, and she always bragged about her journey before settling down.

There was also this book Samael wrote where there was a creature which was a Kraken. Stefan knew that story from cover to cover, as it was one of his favorite books to read. In that story, the Kraken was a powerful creature that reside deep underwater, but it was actually a kind one. Unlike its monstrous appearance and destructive strength, the Kraken was actually a kind soul. The very reason it resided deep in the ocean was to not scare anyone.

A piercing scream brought Stefan back to his senses, wincing as he felt like his eardrum would explode at this thin and sharp noise. Many knights covered their ears, but some weren't quick enough to do so. Their ears bled, and those who were near the source of the piercing sound had also shed tears of blood.

The piercing noise lasted for a minute, but it killed many soldiers. Most of those who didn't survive it had bleeding ears and eyes. The worst ones lost their eyes as if it was popped like a balloon.

Another echoing roar followed the piercing scream before one of the gigantic tentacles moved. It instantly split the warship near Stefan's in half.

Boogsh!

Stefan's eyes were dilated, holding his breath. His gaze was fixed on the Kraken and his grip on the railing tightened, knowing this would be a tough battle to overcome. Such a legendary creature... wouldn't just die in a single slash. It had skin as thick as metals and, with its size, it wouldn't be surprising if the warships would get destroyed in a matter of minutes.

This was bad.

"It's coming!!" A knight's shout echoed in the air after another minute as the other tentacle moved again. This time, it was aiming at Stefan's ship.

"We cannot set sail," mumbled Stefan while the people behind him frantically ran around to move the ship. Even though the Kraken's movements were slow, it wasn't slow enough for them to get away.

Stefan calmed himself down, thinking of how to save all his people. They couldn't row their way to the land, it was still too far. If they desert the ship, the Kraken attacked would just attack the ships again and they would have to keep deserting them.

What should they do?

"Attack it..." Stefan clenched his teeth at the only answer he got. "... damn it!"

Attacking it was easy, but then again, if it fought back, they would lose the ships faster. Why? Because this creature's attack was so powerful it could wipe the ship. Fighting without any land to stand on wasn't ideal.

"It seems there's nothing..." Stefan trailed off, turning his head in a particular direction. When his eyes landed on the land in the distance, he caught a familiar figure waving to get his attention.

"Claude?"

Claude was just the size of an ant. They were that far from each other. However, seeing that Claude was there, Stefan suddenly had an idea. Claude was making silly and big gestures to relay a message, but none of it made sense to Stefan. Still, he didn't need to understand what Claude was saying.

"Maxine!!!" Stefan roared, getting this Divine Bearer's attention and all of those who heard his voice. "Take one ship and go straight to the Land of Spade. Will hold this creature off."

"Claude is there. He will assist you!" he added at the top of his lungs, wielding his sword as he called, 'Lancelot. Let's slice this thing up."

Chapter 835 The scream of death

Claude blinked, putting his hand over his brows to see what was going on. He narrowed his eyes, catching several people lowering rowing boats from either side of the ship. Some of the ships were nosediving into the sea.

"What the..." he trailed off when the Kraken let out another piercingly loud scream, making Claude cover his ears. From this distance, Claude already felt like his eardrums would shatter at the noise. He couldn't imagine how loud it was for those in the ships.

"Iell... what kind of throat..." he couldn't finish his sentence once again as he noticed a figure flying in the air like a shadow.

All Claude saw was this sharp glint of metal before a strong gust of wind blew past him. Claude raised his arm in front of him on instinct, getting slightly drenched by the splash of water. When he peeked over his shoulder, all he saw was this tiny figure in the air with his sword against the Kraken's gigantic tentacle.

"Uncle..." he whispered, recognizing the person who launched that power and quick assault that caused a strong gust of wind.

The already tumultuous waters created giant ripples, making the ships sway along the waves. Despite the distance, the screams and shouts of people trying to flee the ocean reached Claude's ears. Some took advantage of Stefan's attack and the wild waves, using it as their head start to row the boats farther from the Kraken. However, every single one of them was aware that a little distance wasn't enough.

Until they reach the land, the Kraken would easily destroy them. Thus, some of them didn't bother riding the boats and swam their way out of the scene. At this point, Claude could barely identify who were the knights from the Heart's Kingdom and those from the Spade Kingdom.

They all wanted one thing, and that was to survive.

"Damn that Quentin!" Claude cursed Zero and even strangled him several times in his head. The more he see the situation, the more he realized that the knights who were fighting against them were unconscious sacrifices.

Not just the innocent people of the Spade Kingdom, but everyone, even the knights, were nothing but sacrificial lambs.

Claude gazed at the monstrous creature far away. Everyone else looked as tiny as ants, while those tentacles still looked five times taller and bigger than a watchtower. Considering Claude was standing far away, he could imagine just how big it was up close.

"Fuck!" he cursed aloud, noticing that the Kraken moved its two tentacles. Earlier, the Kraken only used one tentacle to break a ship into smithereens. Having him use two or more would be disastrous, especially since the ocean was its advantage.

Stefan and everyone in there would have a hard time battling the Kraken if they didn't have anything to land on.

"Auron!" Claude yelled, clenching his teeth until the veins in his temples protruded angrily. At the same time, another sharp roar from the creature pierced everyone's ears. The ear-splitting noise forced everyone to pause and cover their ears, leaving them all open to receive an attack from the Kraken. Using this time, the Kraken moved its two tentacles, creating violent waves until its tip resurfaced from underwater.

Everyone could only gaze heavenward, wide-eyed. They held their breaths, watching its shadow come closer with every passing second. The majority of them felt their hearts drop to their stomach, knowing this would be their end.

Unlike their will and courage in fighting another man with their swords, before this Kraken, their bodies wouldn't even listen to them. All they felt before their upcoming death was the sense of failure. The people in the area where one of the tentacles was about to land couldn't even shut their eyes as they anticipated their death.

However, just as the tentacle was a meter away from their heads, it stopped. No one noticed it immediately, staring at it blankly until the sticky and slimy fluid trickled down their heads and faces.

"Move!!!" Before anyone could figure out what had just happened, a yell from somewhere echoed faintly. "Do not stop! Keep rowing and reach the land!!"

Some turned their heads to search for the owner of the voice, while others didn't have the time to do so. Instead, they followed the instruction and rowed the boats. Others swam away as fast as they could, not giving the shattered woods and things floating on the sea; even the dead bodies floating didn't hinder them from fleeing the scene.

As long as they were on the water, they weren't safe. The scream of the Kraken was so loud it could kill. Those who thought going underwater to not hear the scream of death were proven wrong and died instantly underwater.

To make it short, they had to get away as soon as possible.

As many soldiers fled the scene, a few stayed behind like Stefan and members of the Divine Order. The Divine Orders stopped the other tentacle with Ramin clutching midair while the rest attacked it. They weren't able to graze it, but they managed to divert the direction where it was attacking.

"Move!! Do not stop! Keep rowing and reach the land!" Maxine, a member of the Divine Order, yelled her lungs out and everyone snapped back to reality.

Maxine landed on the deck of the smaller ship near the Kraken, joining the rest, who hopped away after launching their attacks. Stefan also landed on the ship after Maxine. All of them subconsciously turned their heads to the coast where Claude was standing at.

"That kid..." Ramin grinned, realizing Claude's presence, which he didn't notice before. "... damn. He's not the fearsome earl of Monarey for nothing"

"Good thing he was there to help, Kristina mumbled, peeling her eyes away from Claude to the Kraken before them. "If not for him, half of us were already dead."

Claude stopped the tentacle in time, allowing the Divine Order to attack the Kraken freely. Still, the Divine Order's attacks were nothing. Only Stefan and his Lancelot were able to graze it, albeit shallowly.

"I told you to assist everyone away." While everyone shifted their attention to the Kraken, Stefan spoke quickly. "My gut feeling told me the Divine Bearers were needed in that land more than they were needed in here. I will stop this Kraken"

"Your Majesty -

"Maxine..." Stefan kept his eyes on the monster before them, eyes glinting with murderous intent. "... this is a royal order. Don't make me repeat myself."

Chapter 836 Gifted with the spirit to lead

"Maxine... this is a royal order. Don't make me repeat myself again."

The Divine Bearers who looked up to Stefan frowned deeply, gazing at the king's back. Stefan already told them to assist everyone, but with the monstrous attack the Kraken had displayed, leaving the king just sounded so ridiculous. Still, if that was what the king ordered, they could only abide.

"As you wished, Your Majesty." Maxine bowed and then cast the rest of the Divine Order a look. She wasn't surprised at the lack of worry in Charlotte, Ramin, and Kristina, because they had been shamelessly and openly opposing Stefan.

Maxine and the rest didn't have their memories before the regression, but it wasn't like anything changed. Unlike Charlotte, Ramin, and Kristina, most of them supported Stefan before the regression. Many of them died fighting for Stefan... and they didn't know that was the very reason Stefan was telling them to leave him.

Stefan didn't want to sacrifice their lives again for him. This time, Stefan promised he would make better decisions and wouldn't sacrifice the lives of those who were loyal to him until the very end. Stefan was probably the only person who could understand Zero because there was a point in Stefan's life he could sacrifice everyone - even this world for his own greed.

"I don't consider this as an act to atone for my sins... Stefan told himself as the people on the ship desert it to assist the other soldiers away. "My sins were far graver and needed to be atoned for a lifetime. However, I learned my lessons and my death ironically opened my eyes that were blinded by jealousy, greed, and fear for many years."

Stefan raised his sword as he kept his focus on the Kraken before him.

"Quentin... how come you had resorted to the same decisions that killed not just both of us but also our comrades?" he wondered, despite knowing he wouldn't get an answer from Zero. The guy wasn't here, after all. "How come... you are still blinded by these things when death offers a clear understanding of the people who mattered and not?"

Stefan and Zero died the same night and almost the same way, after all. That night in South Minowa, they didn't just lose their lives. They lost their people those who were aware of their sins and wickedness but still supported them, regardless, out of loyalty.

How could Zero not have the same enlightenment as Stefan?

That the power they sought and the fear they kept running away from wasn't what truly mattered? But their people's lives weren't worth sacrificing for a meager power.

"But then again, I can't call this meager." Stefan breathed out, assessing the Kraken and the bone-chilling aura it was emanating. "This power to control something so powerful... I wonder what sort of deal you have gained all this?"

Stefan drew a deep breath along with the ear-piercing shriek of the Kraken. A powerful gust of wind blew past him, making gigantic waves that rocked the ships and the boats fleeing the scene. When Stefan blinked, the shadow of the monstrous tentacles hovered over him. However, his focus was on the other tentacle that rose along with the one above him.

"Not a chance," he whispered, disappearing from his vantage point.

Five seconds after Stefan fled the ship he was standing on, the ship was split in half as the tentacle landed on it. Meanwhile, Stefan reappeared above a boat, blocking the attack that was about to hit it. Those inside the boat gazed at Stefan's back with wide eyes and gaping mouths, unable to believe how Stefan blocked the attack while mid-air as if Stefan could fly.

"Keep rowing!!" A voice from a distance brought the knights back to their senses, and without thinking twice, they rowed the boat aggressively. Just as they were out of the danger zone, another large wave came from behind the boat, causing them to move faster away from the arca.

"Keep moving!!" another voice from a distance hollered, and another voice repeated those same words. Soon, everyone in each boat had someone screaming their lungs out, saying, "keep moving!" and "to the coast!"

They chanted those words, reminding everyone they had to flee if they wanted to survive. No one dared look back at Stefan as they gritted their teeth, staring at the coast with fire in their eyes.

"Keep moving!!"

"Don't look back!!!"

"To the coast!!!"

The knights let out deep and loud huffs, rowing in sync and using those loud huffs as signals to their movements. Even when an enormous shadow would shade them, they didn't look back or panic. They kept their eyes ahead, especially the Divine Bearers.

The Divine Bearers knew that if they ever look back even once, they would surely change their minds and disobey the king's order. They couldn't do that. Stefan, the king, was risking his life to save his people, which everyone was aware of.

They were the king's soldiers, and yet, the king was the one protecting them. It should be the other way around. Therefore, there was a sense of shame in the soldiers' hearts and gratefulness. No one

spoke about it and only chanted the same chant, but deep in their hearts, all of them pledge to be more useful once they were on the land.

They might stand no chance against the Kraken, but on a battlefield against any land monster, they would surely make way for their king.

War.

Once they reached the land, it would be a bloodbath.

Claude glossed his eyes over the people rowing their boat from a distance. He could feel the burning desire in their hearts to reach the land and their thick aura that spoke of their morale. 'Aside from Auntie Lilove... there's only one person who could move a person's heart,' he thought, admitting to himself that Stefan had a knack for making people stay loyal to him or fight for him to death. 'I guess this is a good sign since we will need an enthusiastic soldier to clean this land.'

Claude raised his gaze over the boats, racing to reach the land. Behind all those boats was a gigantic Kraken and a tiny bit size man battling the former. Stefan would occasionally land on broken wood floating on the ocean for a second before jumping high again. There were times Stefan would land on the Kraken only to slide, but he would only stay for a second so he could jump and stay mid-air.

"It'll be hard for him to keep fighting with that method," murmured Claude after a quick assessment of the battle. "With a limited space to land on, he would soon..."

Claude trailed off when he felt a presence two steps behind him before he heard a familiar voice.

"Can you slow him down?" asked the person behind Claude. "The space around His Majesty. Can you slow the time around him so he could stay mid-air longer?"

Claude looked back in a hurry to confirm the person behind him. He lifted his eyes at the towering person standing behind him, wide-eyed. There were only two people who Claude considered too tall, and one of them was Rufus. The other one was...

"Uncle Alphonse?"

Chapter 837 A dead fish

"Uncle Alphonse?"

Claude's pupils went wide, trying to confirm the face under the shade of the person's hood. When the latter pulled his hood down, Claude's jaw nearly fell.

"What are you..." he trailed off when Alphonse flashed him a short smile, making Claude take a step back.

"I know you and I had so many things to discuss -

"We need no discussion." Claude shook his head in dismay, pulling an aura on him as if to tell Alphonse he wouldn't hesitate to wield his sword at any moment.

"I know." Alphonse breathed out, ignoring the hostility coming from his nephew as he shifted his attention to the battle between the Kraken and Stefan. "I understand you despised me more than

anyone - more than Stefan for taking your parents' lives. No words of apology would ever quench that hatred. However, I believe we are currently in a situation where our personal issues should be put aside."

Alphonse carefully set his eyes back to Claude. "I came here because Stefan told me to assist him. If you and I are still alive after this, we can settle any score"

Silence dawned on them for a moment, staring at each other. After several seconds, Claude let out a weak yet deep huff, relaxing his tense shoulders.

"I can't stop the time from that distance," said Claude, answering his uncle's previous query whilst keeping his eyes on him. "But I can slow it down. I don't know if that is enough since I can only do it for five seconds. I don't want to force myself more than that."

It would be too dangerous for Claude to stop the time longer than a few seconds. After all, he had been using his divine weapon, Auron, since marching the warriors out of the Colosseum. Moreover, he didn't want to lose control over it. Therefore, Claude was careful in using his ability to not make the same mistake as the reversal of time.

"Five seconds is enough." Alphonse rocked his head and gazed at the ocean. He briefly cast all the people in the boat and swimming in their direction a look, before lifting his gaze. The battle between Stefan and the Kraken was intense. Even from this distance, Claude and Alphonse could feel the thick clash of aura that the powerful gust of wind and big waves brought. Aside from one problem that Stefan's places to land on decreased significantly in a matter of a minute, the good thing was that the waves of this clash were causing hastened the speed of the knights approaching the land.

"Support him as much as you can,' said Alphonse after a moment of silence, keeping his eyes on the Kraken. "But only when you think he needed it. Right now, Stefan can fight without anyone's help. Therefore, you should conserve your energy until it is necessary to step in"

Claude's brows rose, gazing at his uncle's side as the latter walked forward until he was standing beside him.

"You are already doing a good job in assisting him and everyone!" Alphonse's eyes slid to the corner, falling on his nephew's figure. "Keep it up."

"I don't need your praise or approval." Claude was irritated, snapping his tongue. "Don't order me around. I know what I am doing"

"I am simply reminding you," said Alphonse, smiling slightly. "After all, you tend to lose your mind whenever you are cornered. I won't ask you to trust us, but rather, Stefan and I don't deserve your slightest concern."

"Just think that whatever you do, we don't honestly care," he continued, taking another two steps until he was in front. "Therefore, there's no point in risking your life or sacrificing your own time for us."

Claude's face darkened at Alphonse's remarks. He balled his hand into a tight fist, getting more irritated the more this man speak as if he had the right to be concerned about him, Claude despised Alphonse just as equally as how he hated Stefan and Alistair.

What they had done to Claude and his parents was unforgivable. The only reason Claude was tolerating their insufferable presence around him was that they had the "same" goal. They had the same enemy, thus, they had to deal with this first.

"What about you?" asked Claude after telling himself to set aside his personal issues with Alphonse. "What are you going to do?"

Claude turned his head in Alphonse's direction, only to see that the latter wasn't moving anymore. Alphonse stood motionless, making Claude furrow his brows. He heard about his uncle's ability to become one with the shadow. However, Claude had no idea about Alphonse's real abilities.

The La Crox had this habit of hiding the real nature of their abilities, after all. Just like Samael, whom everyone thought was gifted, only for him to admit that his real ability was to steal other people's abilities.

Claude took one careful step toward Alphonse, calling him with a quiet voice to see what was going on. His steps became more and more careful until he was standing beside Alphonse. Claude tilted his upper body to the side to see Alphonse's front.

"What are you...?" he trailed off, seeing that Alphonse's eyes were nothing but white. The latter wasn't moving and just standing on the same spot, but Claude was certain Alphonse was currently unconscious.

"Unconscious..." Claude whispered as deep lines appeared in between his brows. "... no, you weren't unconscious. You're just not here, are you?"

Just then, Claude realized something and got a good grasp of Alphonse's real abilities. As soon as he did, Claude's mouth fell open in amusement.

"How... did I miss it?"

Meanwhile, under the ocean, a dead fish that was floating down deep in the ocean opened its eyes. The fish gazed around, catching the dark element that it deemed as the body of the Kraken. Most of its tentacles were still underwater. In other words, those above the sea were simply a portion of it.

'It won't be an exaggeration to say this Kraken had a size of a town, thought the fish, swimming deeper to see how deep the Kraken's body was. As it swam deeper, a thought crossed the fish. 'I should've told him to look after my body. But then again, he might kill me if he knew I was vulnerable in that state.

Chapter 838 The strings of life and death

It was always a mystery to Claude how Alphonse could travel from one place to another. After all, what was known to him was that Alphonse could just appear as a shadow as long as there was a shade. Not that Claude really cared back then; he was just a child when Alphonse died at the hands of Samael. Therefore, they all moved on because of the countless obstacles and problems they needed to solve.

Claude had almost forgotten about Alphonse's existence. This uncle of his didn't even cross his mind, having more things to think about because of the reversal of time. But now that Alphonse had appeared and his body was standing still beside him, Claude finally got the answer he didn't think he would even need.

"What a convenient ability" murmured Claude, staring at the person standing beside him. "I'd take this over mine, to be honest. I wonder what's the catch?"

His brow arched, eyes at Alphonse's figure. Claude narrowed his eyes, pressing his lips into a thin line. He could still hear everyone's echoing huffs as they approached the land and the big splashes caused by the battle between the Kraken and Stefan.

"I wonder..." Claude swiftly swung his arm, pointing his sharp nails at Alphonse's throat. ... so that's the catch, huh?"

He retrieved his hand ever so slowly, allowing his long nails to return to their original length. He rocked his head in understanding, telling himself this shouldn't be an opportunity he should take advantage of.

"We have a common enemy," he whispered to himself, shaking his head to shrug off the wicked idea that suddenly crossed his mind. "I will deal with him later. For now, I need to be mature."

A glint flickered across his eyes while the corner of his lips curled up into a smirk. He couldn't kill or harm Alphonse as the latter might be doing something beneficial to their side. However, that doesn't mean he couldn't do anything to quench his annoyance for being forced into the passivity of the situation.

Claude snapped his eyes ahead, obviously catching the scene which he had been staring at previously. The knights were still rowing their boats in sync while others were swimming. Most of them got rid of their metal armor to swim faster.

The battle between Stefan and the Kraken was still raging on. Stefan was holding his ground, so Claude didn't need to dwell in the fight. He would only help Stefan if the latter needed it. For now, Claude had to conserve even the tiniest energy knowing this fight wouldn't stop when they reach the land. If anything, the battle would only start once the soldiers from the I leart's Kingdom reach the land.

Considering Claude had so much time to spare while resting, he marched towards the end of the fort. He squatted down, dipping his hand into the water only to scoop a handful of water to the concrete ground. He then made a mess, making mud out of the dirt on the ground and the water.

When the dirt turned muddy, the corner of his lips stretched from ear to ear. Mischief shone in his eyes, looking back in Alphonse's direction.

"Sorry, but not sorry" Claude marched back to Alphonse, standing before the latter with his dirty hand.

Like any mischievous young person, Claude stretched his arm and painted on Alphonse's face, giving him a mustache. He drew circles around his uncle's eyes, horns on his temple, and even whiskers. Satisfaction grew clearer on Claude's face the more he added 'art' to Alphonse's face. "I wonder what would be his reaction -"

Claude drew his hand away and hid it behind him when Alphonse suddenly opened his eyes and gasped. His brows rose, smiling politely as if he wasn't doing anything mischievous one second ago.

"You have an awesome ability," mused Claude while Alphonse was trying to catch his breath. 'I would love to have that ability instead of what I have. My abilities were tiring; sometimes, it is also unstable. I guess if one's ability has something to do with time like mine or uncle Stefan's or anything that associates with the natural order, we're bound to make a dangerous decision.'" "Uncle Stefan even lost his mind peeking into the future," he continued, shrugging, "No wonder he stopped peeking into the future since it can be misunderstood -"

"I'll get him out of there! Claude was cut off mid-sentence when Alphonse spoke after recovering his breathing. "Once all the knights reach the coast, I'll get him out of there!" "Pardon?" Claude blinked, confused at the sense of urgency in Alphonse's voice. "What happened? Why do you sound like your brother will die soon?"

"Because he will," Alphonse's response was firm and quick, setting his eyes back to the shore. He glanced at the people in the boat, nodding in approval as the knights were almost close. That was quick of them, but this wasn't the time to commend these knights.

Alphonse lifted his eyes, only to catch Stefan flying upward with his sword thrust forward. Stefan also had done a great job in holding his ground.

"I checked the Kraken's foundation and what I found is that the one we are seeing is simply a small part of it," said Alphonse sternly, eyes burning as if what he said wasn't enough to give justice to what he found. "And to make it worse, I think the Kraken was already dead.

"What?"

"Necromancy," Alphonse whispered to himself. "I would say it was something like that, considering the undead running wild in the land."

"You've been here since the beginning?"

"I've been here even before you, Samael, and everyone with you arrived." Alphonse faced Claude with a stern expression, not knowing what sort of silly act he had on his face. "But that isn't the point. The point here is that Quentin's ability was to control the dead and the alive. He simply preferred controlling the dead to confuse his enemy and make them assume it was necromancy"

"How are you sure of this?"

"I've seen it. Underwater. Attached to the Kraken's head." Alphonse peeled his eyes away from his nephew to look ahead, seeing that the knights were almost there. "The strings of life... and death."

His expression darkened as he had another conclusion in his head. "I wish I was wrong, but I think Quentin got a hold of a demon."

Chapter 839 A reference of the book of adventures

Vampires had different abilities, which they called gifts, or sometimes cursed. Their abilities were always been a double-edged sword; it could be harmful to them if they didn't handle it well. However, aside from that common fact, a vampire's ability had its variation and stages.

It was hard to guess a vampire's ability since most of them learned to hide the real nature of their abilities. Others, just like Zero, would go so far as to make his ability appear different from what it truly was.

Diversion had been a great war tactic. Therefore, one couldn't just fight with everything they have until they uncovered a vampire's ability's real nature.

For instance, Alphonse could occupy a person or an animal's body for as long as it was dead or almost on the brink of death. If Alphonse died inside that body, he could just easily hop to the next body that was available. However, the downside of that was that Alphonse's original body was vulnerable. If his body died, then Alphonse would also die.

It was the same for Zero. However, none of them knew the downside of his abilities. Yet. But what they were certain of was that Zero was a puppeteer. It was not necromancy and that... Alphonse was a hundred and ten percent certain of

"The Kraken was already old, residing deep in the ocean,' said Alphonse, keeping his eyes on the fierce battle between the legendary creature and Stefan. "The more you look at it, his attacks might be destructive and monstrous, but they're unnatural.

"Now that you mention it, you're right." Claude rocked his head in agreement. "Even its screams. sounded painful."

"Because it was in pain."

"Seriously. I don't have spare energy to get angry at Quentin anymore!" A deep exhale slipped past Claude's nostrils, thinking that even a Kraken was being victimized and used by the twisted Zero. "Can you go there?"

"Pardon?"

"Down. Underwater: Alphonse slowly set his eyes on Claude. "I can go there, but I still have to get Stefan out of there. I need someone to cut the link."

Claude just looked at Alphonse's funny face in disbelief. He didn't know whether to laugh at the art plastered on Alphonse's face, which the latter had no idea of, or get offended.

"Just tell me you'd rather have me killed than sacrifice your life" Claude scoffed, shaking his head mildly. "Just don't make it sound like you got no other option than send your nephew to a death trap."

"Just say no."

"For what? To get indebted to you for saving my ass? No, thanks. I'd rather die than"

"..." Alphonse was lost for words, watching Claude take off unnecessary weight on him. The latter was still mumbling, dissing Alphonse.

If Alphonse did everything himself, Claude would complain. But since he asked Claude a favor, he was still complaining. Surely, this was enough to confuse Alphonse with where to stand. Yet, the corner of his lips curled up into a subtle smile.

'I thought even after being raised with that dramatic Klaus, Claude would be different, was what crossed Alphonse's mind. 'I guess Klaus's personality would still rub off of him!

"Is that all I needed to do?" Alphonse was brought back from his momentary trance when Claude spoke. "Don't space out. We have no time for that."

"Yes,"

"What do they look like, and where would I find them?"

"You'll know when you see them. They're like strings on top of its head." Alphonse threw the thoughts he had previously at the back of his head. "Be careful."

Claude only snorted in response to his uncle, walking toward the edge of the ground. But just before he could jump into the water, he looked back at Alphonse.

"Don't stay in the ocean for too long. The Kraken might die once you cut the link and when that happens, it would naturally produce inks that are enough to paint the ocean black. It'll be hard to navigate your way out, considering the tentacles that would fall into the water right after," Alphonse briefed him, stressing each of his words, hoping Claude would listen.

"How the hell did you know all this?" Claude inquired out of pure curiosity. "You sound like you already fought a Kraken before."

"Samael." There was a tinge of embarrassment in Alphonse's tone when he answered Claude honestly. "Hell wrote it in his book of adventures."

"What the?"

"And I've read enough books about a Kraken," Alphonse backed up, throwing away the shame this question and answer brought. "Focus, Claude. Your life is on the line here. Take care."

Claude assessed Alphonse from head to toe before his eyes lingered on the latter's face. His lips curled up, biting his tongue to stop himself from laughing out loud.

"I am not joking, Claude" Alphonse's expression darkened as his voice sounded firmer. "This is not a laughing matter."

"I'm not laughing because you are giving me warnings based on books." Claude grinned mischievously. "I read the first book of Uncle Hell's book of adventures, and I know they were written based on his experience with a little bit of exaggeration. I am just not obsessed with his work, so I can only remember a part of it."

"I'm not saying it's bad or something I should laugh about, but it's just that you look funny," he added, pointing at Alphonse. "I really want to take you seriously, but your face just makes it a challenge."

Claude shook his head while laughing, trying to get a hold of himself. He stretched his arms, tilting his body from one side to the other.

"I just won't look at you, but lest worse comes to worst, tell the Divine Order to scatter and cleanse this land of the undead. That's the reason I came here, after all." Claude didn't idle as he jumped almost immediately, diving into the ocean to do what he was told to do.

Meanwhile, Alphonse stood motionless on his spot, staring at the ripples where Claude jumped into. He assumed what Claude said was just a part of the latter's playful nature. Thus, he didn't dwell on it. Instead, he lifted his eyes, only to see that the knights were almost there.

Chapter 840 What a humor

[COLOSSEUM]

"Samael!!" A loud, heart-pounding roar reverberated across the Colosseum, which was slowly falling apart. Samael, who just landed on top of the powerfully built wall, grinned wickedly. He licked his lips, eyes glowing brighter.

"Quentin... what a fool," he snickered, jumping off the wall as another dark and gigantic thread smashed the wall down. The Colosseum was one of the most unguarded places in the entire Spade Kingdom. Yet, this penitentiary that was disguised as a place for entertainment held capable knights hostage for years. Despite the lack of security, its sturdy and towering walls were enough to keep the exhausted knights within it. But now, this place that imprisoned countless men and muffled their painful cry for help was falling apart one after another. What was silly was that the person who was destroying it was also the person who ordered to build it. Boogsh!

Samael landed on a broken wall, snapping his eyes at the thick smoke ascending to the dark sky, surrounding everything. Yet Samael was unfazed, watching the tentacle slide back from the ruined wall. He lifted his head, searching for the monstrous eyes behind the fog that was glowing in red. But just as he saw a red glint behind the fog, a dark suddenly bolted from below him. Samael leaned back, dodging the blade that was coming at him. He somersaulted in the air, spreading his fingers as he touched a huge piece of debris that was falling, hopping until he reached the rocky ground. "Right... I nearly forgot about you," he remarked when a figure landed several meters from his vantage point. "Quentin, I didn't say it before, but how could you?"

A look of disbelief dominated Samael's face as he assessed Zero in the body of his bastard son, Tristan Willow. "If this had happened before, I would commend you for having such a brilliant idea. However, I am now fathering a son and a daughter, and thus, I am utterly disgusted at how you raised your bastard just for you to take his body." Samael shook his head mildly. "You surely secured a spot in hell with this, Quentin."

Zero, who was in the body of Tristan Willow, chuckled. The threads behind him that looked like a Kraken roared, making the ground shake.

"I've always known there's no amount of repentance that could give me a chance to enter the pearly gates of heaven, Samael. We both know we might not uncover what was there after death, but surely, it wasn't a paradise." Tristan smirked. "Therefore, rather than being enslaved in the eternal damnation, why not make sure you will go there as a legendary so that even Satan would tremble at the thought of your presence?"

"I see..." Samael narrowed his eyes while the corner of his lips curled up. "... I presumed you had such a thought because you are not sure you will succeed, huh?"

Tristan raised his brows, cocking his head to the side. "I mean, it seems you're doing all this because you're anticipating your death." Samael sported a knowing look, giving him a piece of his mind. "I used to think that way. If I'm going to hell, I'd rather go there in the most flashy way. But now that I am a married man and fathering my children, the thought of death doesn't even cross me."

"I can't die — that option isn't even available, especially with people like you who walked the same ground as my children," he continued, shaking his head mildly. "Until my wife and my children are alive... I won't die; it's non-negotiable."

"Good for you." Tristan nodded. "Should I clap?"

"Please."

Tristan laughed, clapping slowly while Samael playfully planted his palm across his chest, bowing. "You truly have a sense of humor, Samael," Tristan mused, receiving a playful, "you are welcome," from Samael, before he added, "the only redeemable thing about you."

"I could say the same to you, Quentin." Samael slowly lifted his gaze to the monstrous thing behind Tristan. Despite the thick fog surrounding the area, he could see the dark and giant silhouette waving its destructive tentacles. "For instance, I can't help but recall an adventure I had many years ago. It almost slipped my mind since my head is filled with how I am going to make love to my wife after this arduous task I must finish. But the more I fight you and think of the situation of this poor land, the more I remember a particular story I had written in my book of adventure." He shifted his eyes back to Tristan, only to see the latter smirk defiantly. "In one of the adventures I had, there was this place. It was a small town, so small that everyone knew everyone. Therefore, they knew when a new person moves into the town. I was new back then and got a lot of attention."

Remembering one of the experiences he had during his vagabond days, Samael couldn't help but smile. "They were friendly people. Kind, hospitable, and generally polite. They welcomed me with warmth. It wasn't hard for me to adjust to this temporary life; though I was a little guilty of spewing lies about everything about me." Samael paused as his countenance grew firmer. "Sadly, that town was plagued by a disease. Everyone got sick, and the consequences were unfathomable. Some died almost instantly, others took days before meeting their end. However, those who thought got healed started having delusions a few days later until they lost their minds. It was crazy that even I, who was willing to help, couldn't do anything. After all, this mysterious parasite already got into their heads."

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"It got to a point that some of them would resort to self-harm, eating their own flesh. They remind me of the undeads in this place. There might be a distinct difference, but from another angle, it was the same. They were still running toward their own demise... and it wasn't a natural cause." A dark aura emanated from Samael's back as his eyes sharpened. "Another story that reminds me of these events was when I found a good friend underwater."

"Quentin, you truly have a dry sense of humor — it's hilarious." Samael spread his hand as his blood boiled, assuming Zero was using Samael's words in his books to twist them all. For Samael,

the Kraken he met many years ago was dangerous and just as destructive as this one, but it also had a big heart and understanding. They even became friends. But now, Samael had to kill these dark threads that looked like a friend of his. "You can say I am a fan of your work?" humored Tristan, sensing this suffocating aura Samael was pulling on him. "Then don't worry." Samael's irises dilated, hissing. "I will gladly engrave my autograph in that brain of yours."

Tristan smirked, only to hear Samael yell, "Catharsis!" and then a fast-moving weapon came from behind him, grazing Tristan's cheek as the latter barely dodged Samael's weapon. "I didn't get to write some details in my books, but since you are a fan, I'd give you the honor of seeing and experiencing how those adventures truly ended..." Samael bent his knees and in a blink of an eye, he appeared behind Tristan, catching the latter by surprise. "... Zero."

SLASH!

Blood splashed across the already red ground, followed by a limb and severed head rolling on the ground.