

Evil 211

Chapter 211 - 211: Corrupted.

A tall and slender figure with a rusty greatsword in his hand, dragging it on the ground appeared from the corner of the tunnel. His figure was no longer as that of a human, his arms were long all the way down to his knees. He was taller than Aris even with a hunchback, and his eyes were pitch black.

"Hmm, this reminds me of the Corrupted. This thing is no longer a human," Aris narrowed her eyes. "This isn't the possession of a living human, it possesses a corpse..."

Rasmus narrowed his eyes as he readied his stance and remembered the information that Videl had given him. The experiment that Yaza did to recreate lives using human bodies. In front of him, it might be a failed product, but even so, it looked strong.

The hunchback man's eyes suddenly glowed and glared at them. He raised his sword and charged toward Rasmus who stood in front. He didn't hesitate to swing his sword down vertically at him.

Rasmus coated his sword with Aura and swung it upwards horizontally. The moment his sword clashed with the man's greatsword, his sword shattered the man's greatsword easily.

No matter how strong someone was, if their weapons were no match for the Blackheart Sword, it was pointless. Rasmus immediately swung his sword down vertically at the man, but the man dodged it by dashing away.

They didn't expect the man to move swiftly with that tall body. They watched the man climb the wall and hang on the ceiling like a spider, hissing at them.

The man tried to run deeper into the cave, but Rasmus immediately cast a lightning bolt at him. The man got zapped and toasted by the spell, which should be enough to kill a human being.

To Rasmus's surprise, the man was still alive and immediately got back up to his feet. He realized that he wasn't facing a living being, and if that man was similar to a demonic beast that was immune to magic to some extent, his lightning bolt wouldn't kill him. What was dead, it couldn't be killed anymore.

Rasmus chased after the man with Javi and Aris following him from behind. The man crawled on the ceiling so quickly that it was hard to keep up with it.

The man suddenly stopped running away and landed on the ground. The pungent smell became unbearable, and Rasmus had to use the remaining Mana that existed in the cave to create a stronger wind barrier.

Aris lit up the dark cave with a ball of light that she had made with Mana. That was when they saw piles of corpses everywhere with maggots feasting on the rotten flesh. Suddenly, the corpses began to move their fingers and toes as the man kept screeching.

"That thing is releasing a demonic energy..." Aris said with her eyes narrowed. "He's going to bring those corpses back to life," she added.

Rasmus didn't say a single word and instantly ran toward the man with his sword ready to cut him in half. He swung his sword and decapitated the man in a single slash, but he knew it wouldn't kill him since he remembered what Lenin said about the Corrupted beings that they couldn't be killed with physical attacks.

He looked around and saw the corpses begin to rise and crawl off the piles. He cast fireballs around him, and when he was about to throw them at the piles, the fireballs got extinguished.

"You can't use something like that to kill them, at least not yet," Aris shook her head as she raised her sword. "I'll kill them, so stand behind me," she said and looked at the demonic energy that loomed over the cave.

Rasmus immediately followed Aris's words and stood behind her with Javi.

Aris swung her sword horizontally from left to right in the blink of an eye. A strong gush of wind pushed both Rasmus and Javi even further back. They saw traces of light blue lights that looked like small fireflies scattered around the cave. They didn't know what had just happened, but what she did there made the corpses stop moving.

Since that attack that Aris did, the corpses began to decompose faster. They saw the flesh of the corpses vaporize into thin air until there was nothing left but the bones. Rasmus and Javi had never seen anything like that before, and it was both amazing and terrifying.

"They're gone now, they won't come back to life anymore," Aris said as she swung her sword around. "This doesn't look good at all, Rasmus. Nobody can kill these things unless someone with powerful divine power cleanse them," she pointed out and turned around to look at Rasmus.

"This is similar to what happened beyond the Blackcliffs?" Rasmus asked.

"Yes, and now all we have to do is to burn these skeletons," Aris glanced over her shoulder at the piles of skeletons, and then suddenly a blaze of flame appeared from thin air, turning the skeletons into ashes.

"This is problematic, but that's fine since Saint Astrea will be coming here to do these kind of job," Rasmus said as he stored his sword into the ring. "For now, let's head back. We need to inform this matter to Thalior," he sighed and noticed the Mana had become rich again after Aris burned the corpses.

Aris and Javi nodded then followed Rasmus go down the mountain to go back to the city.

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"So it's the Corrupted again..." Thalior rubbed his jaw with a troubled look on his face. "This is not good... The Alliance doesn't know about this at all, and if they encountered the Corrupted, they can do nothing..." He sighed as he shook his head.

Rasmus furrowed his brows as he crossed his arms deep in thought.

"Something bothers you, Count?" Thalior asked with his brows raised.

"The only one that benefits from this war against the revolutionary parties is the emissary and the demonic cults. We have decided to go to war against the revolutionary parties, and what will happen to

the corpses if we let them be, Your Grace?" Rasmus asked and stared at Thalior with a serious expression.

"They would turn those corpses into an army of the dead," Thalior crossed his arms and looked outside the window.

"It can be prevented if we burn all the corpses until there's nothing of them left," Rasmus said with his head rested on his fist. "That way, they won't gain anything from this," he added.

Thalior nodded in agreement and then he excused himself to write a letter. It didn't take a while until he came back and told Rasmus that he had sent someone to deliver the message to Xena. He knew that Xena had the power to make the Alliance listen to her and could prevent unnecessary problems.

"I can't thank you enough, Count. You have prevented humanity from destruction once again..." Thalior said, and then sat across from Rasmus. "I couldn't imagine what would happen to us if we were oblivious of their existence here..." he clasped his hands and sighed.

"Keep your eyes on your surroundings, not just the one that's in front of you," Rasmus responded as he stretched his fingers underneath the gauntlets he wore. "We don't know how many tricks that the emissary has under his sleeves, so keep an eye on everything."

"Yes, I understand," Thalior nodded.

"Have you sent the warning letter?" Rasmus asked.

"We did, and our next plan is to take the remaining cities and small towns while we wait for their response," Thalior answered. "More than half of the civilians are against us, Count. They have been brainwashed that we are their enemies. It's going to be hard, but it's manageable," he added.

"Someone must to take the blame for their dissatisfaction, and the majority of them chose us," Rasmus nodded with understanding. "It's not an issue to be bothered about, Your Grace. We should focus on the real threats out there," he continued as he stood up.

"We will be moving tomorrow in the morning, Count. Get some rest, and thank you," Thalior looked up at Rasmus who was about to leave the room.

"Say that once we solve the problems, Your Grace. We are barely done anything," Rasmus said and then left the room as he put on his helmet.

Thalior leaned back as he sighed and nodded.

Chapter 212 - 212: Doubts.

"You bastard! I'll kill all of you!" A knight charged toward Javi, who stabbed another knight with his Katar right on the Knight's throat.

Rasmus swung his sword and decapitated the knight before he could reach Javi. He then looked at a man who was being held hostage by the revolutionary knight.

"Stop! Or I'll kill this man!" The knight shouted with his sword placed on the man's neck.

He released Aura and pushed the knight away from the man. He dashed and thrust his sword right on the Knight's helmet, piercing it all the way to the back. The man screamed as he collapsed in fear.

The remaining revolutionary knights charged at Rasmus, knowing that running away was no longer an option. Javi and Aris ran past Rasmus and began to kill each of them with a single strike.

Rasmus looked at the remaining revolutionary knights who had decided to run away, gambling with their lives. He chased after them and swung his sword at them, releasing a slash wave. He cut them all in half, and they were all screaming and crawling in pain.

Once Javi had killed the last knight, he saw the revolutionary knights from a distance, dealing with the Union Knights. He jumped to the tallest building and pulled out his bow.

He shot a few arrows in a matter of seconds at them. The distance was more than a hundred meters, but all his arrows hit all the targets. He then saw the mages from the revolutionary army that were casting spells to kill the Union Knights.

Before he could pull an arrow from the quiver, lightning bolts struck them and killed them instantly. He looked up and saw Rasmus floating, it was he who killed the mages before they could react.

Novia created a Mana barrier, preventing the archers from killing the knights and civilians. She didn't want to kill, so all she did was to protect the Union army and the civilians.

Rasmus didn't stop advancing with Aris and Javi near him. They got rid of the remaining revolutionary army that was trying to leave the city. Nobody could escape from those three, even Thalior and the Union army was terrified by them.

"They're not acting like knights... They're like hunters chasing their hunts..." A knight muttered as he watched those three massacre the revolutionary army near the gate.

"Thank God that they're on our side..." Another knight nodded in agreement with the sweat all over his face underneath the helmet.

Once they occupied the Cradle City, all the knights gathered the corpses. They already knew about the existence of the Corrupted, which could bring the dead back to life, and they had done it a few times by now. They didn't have a choice, especially seeing their comrades who died, to be burned to ashes.

"This is the fourth city that we have taken away from the revolutionary parties. We have reduced their numbers and power quite significantly," Thalior looked at the map as he removed his gloves. "What are the odds of them abandoning the capital city?"

"Close to none at the moment. They still have a lot of manpower and a whole city that can defend them. They should have prepared all the arsenal they have and placed them in the capital city by now," Rasmus answered and looked down at the map. "They might retreat once they realize it's unwinnable."

"That's what I thought as well. It has been four days since we set foot on this kingdom. They must have taken all the arsenal and placed them in the capital city," Thalior nodded in agreement.

"We have enough manpower to surround the capital city, but Aris and I can cover the west and north gates. Javi and Lady Novia can cover the east gate while the Union army can cover the south gate," Rasmus pointed at the gates to enter and exit the capital city.

Thalior didn't doubt Aris and Rasmus could single-handedly block the gates on their own. Rasmus was a mage they even Great Sage Lenin recognized, and not to mention the Blackheart family produced great mages.

"Let's do that," Thalior nodded, trusting his guts and Rasmus's words. "What do you think, Lady Novia? Can you hold the east gate with Sir Javi?" He looked at Novia with his brows raised.

"I can create a barrier that prevents them from leaving. But what about the civilians? We must consider their safety," Novia said, looking at Rasmus and Thalior.

"Grayson..." Thalior looked at the door.

A man wearing a black robe, covering his face with a shawl that only revealed his brown eyes, appeared. He entered the room and went to one knee as he lowered his head and one fist on the floor.

"Order the whole Black Scarf unit to scout the capital city and not alert the enemy," Thalior looked down at Grayson. "If they tried to harm the civilians during the war, execute them without getting noticed," he ordered.

Grayson nodded and then left the room without making a sound. Javi noticed Grayson's movements, it was the technique that belonged to the Sand Tower.

Rasmus, Aris, and Javi had noticed Grayson and the Black Scarf unit when they lived in the South Neva Union headquarters. They knew that Thalior had a specific unit to deal with things in secrecy, but they had never confronted them.

"We will rest for the next two days here. If there's no response from them, we will move on the third day in the morning," Thalior looked at Rasmus and Novia with a serious expression.

They both nodded with understanding and left the room.

"Count, may I have a few words with you?" Novia asked as soon as they left the room.

"Lead the way, Lady Novia," Rasmus nodded.

Novia led Rasmus to the other side of the mansion, where they stayed for the next few days. She entered the parlor and respectfully pointed at the coach so Rasmus could sit first before her.

"What's bothering you, My Lady?" Rasmus asked as he sat down.

"The Emissary in Central Neva. She was an interesting figure that it was hard for anyone, even my master and Her Holiness to confront her," Novia said and sat down across from Rasmus.

"Interesting? How's she interesting?" Rasmus asked with his brows furrowed.

"She... She was compassionate, and she taught nothing related to demons or tried to convince the people that she was a savior or tried to mislead the people in any way," Novia answered as she looked at her hands. "She even tried to lead the people who lost their way and made them believe in God," she added as she played with her fingers.

Rasmus didn't find it surprising at all because the fallen angels were once devoted to God. They were more devoted to God than humans ever could, after all, they were once angels.

"What is her name?" Rasmus asked.

"Penema," Novia answered.

Rasmus tried to remember the names of the fallen angels, and the closest that fitted with her description would be Penemue. The fallen angel that taught humanity writings and literature, which was why Penema tried to bring humanity back on the right path. There was no harm in her methods, but in

the Book of Enoch, Penemue was neutral, and it was humans who used that knowledge to question everything, even God.

"It's not her that you need to worry about, it's the people," Rasmus said as he leaned back and crossed his legs. "When a human heart has even a tiny space of doubt, it will grow. It's not Penema that you need to worry about, but the knowledge that humans interpret it wrongly that creates doubt," he explained and stared into Novia's eyes.

Novia raised her brows, her mouth hung open after she listened to Rasmus's answer. She never thought it that way, and even both Astrea, the Saint, and Lenin, the Great Sage, failed to see it. She realized that the emissaries' mission was to bring doubts to humanity, which was why they gained followers in the first place.

"The simplest and yet the hardest thing to do is to remove doubts in the people's hearts. If you want to get rid of Penema or to see her true color, do that," Rasmus suggested as he fixed his sitting. "It's hard because to have a blind faith in God, that can be interpreted differently and can affect people differently," he added.

"Is that the only thing we can do?" Novia asked.

"No, but would they dare to take an extreme measure to get rid of her once and for all? We are here in South Neva, waging a war just because they don't want to take extreme measures. Nothing can feel right if you put emotions and ideals into everything," Rasmus smiled at Novia.

Novia looked at the ceiling, aimlessly as she took a deep breath and sighed deeply.

"Nobody wants to be hurt, to suffer, but they're not the same as the others. It has always been like that. You can interpret that however you like, but some have to lose to let the other win," Rasmus said as he stood up. "Stand where you believe in, and others will question your belief. Good day, Lady Novia," he smiled and then left the room.

Chapter 213 - 213: Old friend.

Two days had passed, and the revolutionary parties hadn't given their answer to the warning letter. Thalior didn't have any choice but to be true to his words, and that was to attack the capital city.

The winter became a lot colder and harsher as the days went by. The winter on Earth was nothing compared to Neva because of the extreme cold and weather.

"We are sticking to the plan..." Thalior said, his breath vaporizing, and he could no longer breathe with his nose. "We will try to break in. We will move in the middle of the night..." he looked at Rasmus and Novia.

"Can your army deal with this bad weather? They have trebuchets, catapults, and ballistas. Without Lady Novia on your side and in the open, you'll be an easy target," Rasmus said, unbothered by the cold because he used Mana to keep the heat in and around his body.

"Don't underestimate the Union's mages, their ranks are at least High Wizard. They can handle them if they make powerful barriers," Thalior answered with confidence. "We can prevent the harsh weather with their magic as well. We will be fine," he assured.

"I know you're on par with Lady Novia, and even Great Sage Lenin acknowledges your magic. You have also awakened your Primal Force, making you even stronger than me. However, I want you to be careful, Count. We don't know if there's any demon hiding or assisting the enemy in the city," Thalior said with a serious expression, his eyes were stared right into Rasmus's eyes.

"My job is to prevent the enemy from retreating. I won't show myself until the enemy leaves the city," Rasmus said as he put on his gauntlets and vambraces.

"That doesn't change the fact you need to be cautious, Count," Thalior furrowed his brows.

"I'm not going to die or get hurt. I'm confident because I know I won't get hurt," Rasmus responded coldly as he grabbed his helmet. "I'll take my leave, Your Grace," he said and then left the room.

Rasmus walked in the hallway, closing his eyes and trying to find him near the mansion area with perception magic.

(Last night)

Rasmus was writing about the fallen angels' names in his notebook. He tried to predict what kind of moves that Penema, Azel, and Yaza would take in the future.

While he was deep in thought, he felt a chill down his spine. He felt a smooth finger brush against his nape, and when he turned around, he saw the same shadowy figure. It was standing right behind him until it suddenly disappeared and reappeared at the door.

He followed the shadowy figure and ended up in the backyard of the mansion. He saw Vidal casually sitting on the chair in the gazebo, staring at the night sky.

"Let me guess, you came here to keep an eye on the South Neva Union movements during the war?" Rasmus asked as he got to the gazebo and sat across from Vidal.

"Under my so-called lord, but we both know that I'm here to devour all the souls of the dead," Vidal smiled mischievously as he stared into Rasmus's eyes.

"Enough of that, let's catch up while we still can," Vidal smiled as he rested his cheek on his fist. "You have grown taller, stronger, and slowly turning into an Orthias," he chuckled as he leaned forward to look at Rasmus's face from up close.

"Let me hear your story first," Rasmus leaned back and crossed his legs.

Vidal's power had skyrocketed, and he could use at least 10% of his power. He had devoured thousands of lives since everyone had gone their separate ways. He also constantly devoured lesser demons that Kiel and Yaza summoned to Neva without them knowing.

He had mastered dark magic and could change his appearance like he used to do. Nobody knew his real face, and he hid his power to the point that even Kiel and Yaza's demons couldn't detect his demonic energy.

Although he had gained a little of his power, he kept distancing himself from everyone. He didn't want to put Rasmus in danger because if Rasmus died, it would be over for him too. The bet he made with God was the only thing that held him back from doing reckless things.

"Am I stronger than you now?" Rasmus asked with his brows raised.

"Don't get too cocky. You might hurt me and wound me, but to defeat me? You need to be at least half of Aris's level to be able to defeat me completely," Videl chuckled as he smirked. "You can't even fight my minions. I'm untouchable if I want to play unfairly," he added.

Videl glanced and saw Aris walking toward them with a cold gaze. He grinned as he stood up and leaned against the pillar, waving at her.

"You reek..." Aris said as she walked past Videl and took a seat

"I thought you would say something like you miss me," Videl sighed and hid his power completely, making his body no longer reek of demonic energy.

Aris stared at Videl dead in the eye as she reached her hand at Rasmus. Without even asking about that gesture, Rasmus pulled out his Blackheart Sword from the ring and put it on her hand.

"I'm joking..." Videl scoffed as he raised his hands. He was still no match for Aris even with his current state. "You know you're showing favouritism this whole time. You really are something..." he sighed and sat down.

Aris swung her sword at Videl. Before the tip of the blade cut his neck, she stopped. Videl knew that she wouldn't hurt him, so he didn't react at all.

"Join us, Javi," Rasmus said as he wiped off the snow on his shoulder.

Javi landed without making a noise and entered the gazebo. He glanced at Videl with a curious look because Aris had never acted that way toward anyone. He could tell how much she despised or even disgusted Videl, but didn't want to kill him.

"You must have heard enough, right?" Rasmus glanced at Javi with a cold gaze.

Javi nodded even though he was slightly anxious after being given such a gaze. He knew enough about Videl, a man who dwelled with dark magic, who devoured souls, both humans and demons.

"Is he your bodyguard? He's good," Videl stared at Javi while his hand slowly pushed the blade away from his neck, however, Aris pushed his hand back instead.

Rasmus told his story from the very beginning when he reached the Druloem Kingdom. He let Videl know everything since he trusted him more than anyone in this world. It was funny that he would trust the Devil more than anyone.

Videl couldn't stop grinning when he found out about the situation on the East Neva. He could imagine the number of souls he could reap and devour since East Neva was going to have all-out wars.

He then found out about Daryus and Javi's existence, and why they were following Rasmus. Knowing Javi's background, he felt a bit relieved because he found someone that he could play with.

"It's getting late..." Videl said as he got up. "I have to go back to the capital city, spying on that stupid revolutionary army," he looked at the distance.

"I'll see you all there," Videl said and disappeared into thin air.

Aris had to cover her nose with the back of her hand because of the strong and unpleasant scent that Videl released.

(The next day at midnight)

Rasmus went to the west gate stealthily as planned, and it led to a forest where it would reach another nation. He leaned against the wall until Videl revealed himself from behind the tree.

"How many should I kill?" Videl asked, glancing at Rasmus.

"Not more than three hundred Union Knights. Make sure the revolutionary army safely leaves the west gate. I'll kill them all while you can feast on them after," Rasmus answered and stared at the tall city wall that had been fortified.

"I'll do just that..." Videl chuckled and then disappeared.

Rasmus pulled out his helmet from thin air and slowly put it on. Suddenly, he heard the bell ring from the capital city. He looked at the city wall and saw boulders being thrown away into the air.

"It has begun..." Rasmus muttered and stabbed the sword to the ground, standing tall with his hands resting on the pommel of the sword.

Chapter 214 - 214: Intruders.

"Fire!" A revolutionary knight shouted and pointed his sword at the Union army that was trying to enter the south gate.

Boulders, arrows, and giant arrows were shot at them, bombarding them without hesitation. However, the Mana barriers that the mages created were strong enough to deflect and stop them. No matter how many were thrown at them, the Union army didn't stop advancing.

The revolutionary mages couldn't penetrate the barriers as well since they weren't strong enough. They didn't want to waste their energy on something pointless, so they reserved their energy for the real fight later.

"Prepare the magic arrows!" The revolutionary knight ordered.

The revolutionary knights carried the ballista giant arrows that had been engraved with runes. Once they loaded all the ballistas, the knight signaled them to throw the giant arrows at the Union army. The arrows were infused with Mana, activating the magic formation, creating a piercing and wind-breaking spell.

Once the arrows were released, the Union army noticed the difference between the previous arrows and the ones that were flying toward them. The moment the arrows hit the barriers, they shattered them and put the whole army in a vulnerable state.

"Take cover!" Thalior shouted as he watched boulders, spells, and arrows fly toward them.

Thalior and the elite knights imbued their swords with Aura, releasing slash waves at the boulders. They managed to prevent the boulders from hitting the army while the knights protected the mages from the spells and the arrows with their shields.

It would take time to create Mana barriers, and they had no choice but to endure the bombardment that the revolutionary army had thrown at them. They couldn't protect themselves since they were out in the open, especially with the rough weather.

"Fire!"

Giant ballista arrows were flying toward them, and they couldn't protect themselves from it. They raised their shields, but it was pointless as the arrows sent them all flying, breaking their bones and limbs. They were unable to do anything but to charge forward and wait for the mages to create the Mana barriers again.

"We need more time..." Thalior looked at the wounded and fallen soldiers behind him. "Give them the signal," he ordered. One of the mages cast a fireball into the sky and exploded it when it was high enough. The signal was seen by the Black Scarf unit that had infiltrated the capital city.

Since they had infiltrated the city for the past two days, they had managed to get armor for themselves. They blended in with the revolutionary army, and nobody suspected them a thing.

The unit moved in the dark and moved toward the south wall. They killed the soldiers they saw on their way to the wall without making any sound.

Once they got on top of the wall, they ran toward the knights who operated the ballistas. They unsheathed their swords and killed them before the other could react.

"Intruders! Kill the intruders!"

The Black Scarf unit managed to do what they came for, which was to attract the enemy's attention. They coated their swords with Aura, destroying the enemy's arsenals as they fought the knights.

"Now!" Thalior pointed his sword at the massive steel gate.

The remaining mages who didn't work on the Mana barriers cast fireballs at the gate. They bombarded the gate repeatedly until the steel gate toppled while the knights protected them.

Knowing the gate was open, the enemy had no choice but to wait for the Union army to enter the city. They were anxious since it was them who became vulnerable from the attacks.

(At the same time in the palace)

"Enemy is entering from the north gate!"

"North gate? What do you mean? There was nobody before!" The revolutionary knight commander glared at the knight with a confused expression.

"It's only one person..."

"One person? And you're reporting to me just because of one person?" The commander shouted. "Deal with him!"

"We couldn't... Sir. He single-handedly killed everyone on the wall..."

"What?!" The commander was dumbfounded. "Who is he?" He asked.

"We don't know, Sir. His face is hidden under the helmet, he's just a knight... an ordinary knight of the South Neva Union..."

"How could an ordinary knight kill all the knights on the north gate?! Are you stupid?!" The commander yelled at the knight. "Frasa!" He shouted as he looked around.

A big bald knight with a big scar across his face approached the commander. His eyes were cold and menacing as he stared at the commander's eyes.

"Go to the north gate and kill the intruder! I want him dead!" The commander glared at Frasa.

Frasa nodded and grabbed his sword and shield from the wall. Not long after he left, a mysterious man approached the commander and stood behind him.

"Is there a problem?" The man asked in a calm and gentle voice.

The commander got a chill in his arms as he slowly turned around. He nervously swallowed his saliva and lowered his head.

"No, My Lord... everything is under control. We still have something under our sleeves, and we will use it to defeat them when things aren't going well," the commander answered, his head still lowered and didn't dare to look at the man's face.

"Are you prepared to bear the consequences? I don't need to remind you if you fail, you have nowhere to run or hide. Your life is the only way to pay for this failure," the mysterious man said and then walked into the shadows.

"Damn it!" The commander slammed the desk as he looked out the window.

Frasa and dozens of other knights went to the north gate to check on the problem. When they arrived, they were shocked the bodies of knights scattered near the wall.

They couldn't believe that something like this was done by one person. The only people that came to their minds were Swordmasters. However, they were informed that there was no Swordmaster other than Thalior since Uriel didn't join the war.

"Who did this..." Frasa raised his shield anxiously.

"We... we don't know, Sir..."

Frasa looked around, and he couldn't find the intruder that the knight had mentioned. He didn't like the situation he was in, and the person who could do all that alone, he wouldn't be a match for that person.

"Keep your eyes open... widely..." Frasa raised his sword and kept looking around.

The knights were anxious as they stayed close to each other. Suddenly the sound of an arrow was heard and hit right on the Knight's eye, in between the gap in the helmet. Another knight got hit right in between his eyes with an arrow before they could react from the first one.

"Raise your shield and take cover!" Frasa shouted.

They managed to block a few arrows that were released at them with their shields. They didn't dare to lower their shields because of the culprit's extreme accuracy that could kill them even in the dark of night.

They noticed the enemy had stopped, and one of the knights slowly lowered his shield to check. In a matter of a second, he got shot by an arrow, piercing through his skull from a different angle.

"Find cover!" Frasa said as he looked at the house behind him. "Over there! Go!" He ordered.

The knights slowly walked backwards until they all entered the house safely, including Frasa. As soon as they closed the door, Frasa threw his shield out of frustration.

"Coward!" Frasa shouted.

Before Frasa's frustration subdued, they heard something land on the roof. They all looked up and became quiet and stood still. Then they heard a creaking sound from upstairs, a sound of a window being opened.

"You two, go and check," Frasa pointed at the two knights in front of him.

The knights walked up the stairs slowly and quietly. Frasa and the remaining knights' eyes were focused on the top of the stairs. It was dark, with only moonlight providing light for the second floor.

It hadn't been a minute when they heard a loud thudding sound from the ceiling. They then saw blood dripping down the stairs and hitting the floor. The final string of their courage snapped when they saw two heads rolling down the stairs.

All the knights didn't think twice and instantly ran toward the door. As soon as they left the building, their heads got cut off before they could even scream.

Frasa was petrified that everyone got killed. He glanced at the shield that he had thrown earlier, and before he could move a muscle, the door was being closed. He slowly turned around and saw the man in the South Neva Union armor with his hands behind his back.

"Please..." Frasa collapsed, his legs could no longer move.

Javi revealed his hands, showing Frasa the katar on each hand that was covered in blood. He approached Frasa, leaving trails of blood on the floor.

"Coward," Javi muttered coldly, mocking Frasa for saying that word as he raised his hands.

"I... I—" Before Frasa could finish his sentence, Javi had decapitated him and disappeared.

Chapter 215 - 215: Mysterious figures.

"The enemy has entered the city, Sir! We can't stop them... They're too strong. They're the South Neva Union knights, and the morale of the soldiers is plummeting..."

The commander gritted his teeth and clenched his fists. He had more than 5,000 soldiers in the capital city while the Union army had 3,000. They had the number and the walls, and yet they failed.

"Prepare to retreat. We have killed them enough, and we don't want to lose our troops," the commander said quietly, hiding his anger and frustration. "But we will release those things first..." he added.

The knight captains shared a look, knowing exactly what the commander meant. They had no choice but to listen since it would be enough to buy them time to leave. The Union army wouldn't have the time to chase after them.

Thalior blocked three swords at the same time, and then pushed them away as he swung his sword at them. His attack with Aura imbued on the sword was enough to cut the knights' torsos.

"Save the civilians! Don't let the enemy touch them!" Thalior ordered as he watched his knights occupy the city slowly.

Even amidst the war, the Union army followed Thalior's orders to not do unnecessary kills. They only immobilized and knocked out the enemy knights or wounded them enough to stop them from fighting.

Thalior noticed the Revolutionary knights were retreating, knowing they couldn't win against the Union army. He then focused on the remaining knights to rescue the civilians and to treat them.

As the knights escorted the civilians, they noticed an unpleasant smell that had been lingering in the air. The longer they smelled it, the worse it became to the point it became pungent.

Suddenly they heard a loud scream from a woman in the distance. It was so loud that it echoed throughout the silence of the early morning.

Some of the knights went to check, but then they heard another scream from somewhere else. Slowly there were more screams all over the capital city.

"It's the Corrupted, My Lord. There are at least twenty of them. They have killed a few of our knights," Grayson reported to Thalior.

"What?! How can they be here?!" Thalior was shocked. "So that means the revolutionary parties have decided to side with the demons..." he clenched his fists tightly.

"What should we do, My Lord? We can't kill them and to face them will be disadvantageous..." Grayson asked.

"Avoid them at all costs. We have Lady Aris who will deal with them. Focus on the civilians and their safeties," Thalior answered without hesitation. "Don't let anyone die if you can

Grayson nodded and then left to inform the knights to avoid the Corrupted.

Aris was standing on top of the wall, staring at the city with a sharp gaze. She sensed the Corrupted that were scattered in the city, killing people and even chasing the Union knights. She let them be for a moment since Videl needed to feast on the souls to grow stronger.

Once she waited enough, she jumped down and began to follow the most efficient route to eliminate the threat. She counted there were twenty-four Corrupted scattered all over the city.

On her way to find the first Corrupted, she saw a person standing in the dark alley, it was Videl in a different appearance. He was waving and smiling at her, enjoying his feast of devouring souls of the dead.

She saw the Corrupted ripped apart a woman's body, and then took a big chunk of her neck by biting her. She swung her sword, killing both the woman and the Corrupted as an act of mercy for the woman.

She ran toward the next location, and didn't bother to look at the dead bodies around her. She glanced to her left and noticed the revolutionary army was retreating to the west gate. She smirked since Rasmus was waiting for them outside the wall.

When she reached the second location, she saw five knights fighting the Corrupted. They struggled because of how strong the Corrupted was, and one of them got badly injured.

She moved so fast that not even the Knights saw her coming. The moment the Corrupted got cut in half, they only saw a split image of the armor that went past them. When they turned around, they saw Aris staring at the sky in that ordinary armor.

"Th—thank you, Lady..." One of the knights gathered the courage to say that.

Aris didn't respond or react as she began to move again to find the remaining Corrupted. No matter where she went, Videl was there in the dark alley, following her without being detected by the knights.

After Aris eliminated all the Corrupted, Videl got enough souls during the war and the chaos. It wasn't much, but he didn't complain because that was just the appetizer when the real feast was about to come.

He went to the west gate and followed the revolutionary army that was retreating. He noticed there was a demonic energy among the crowd until he looked at one of the carriages.

"So you're the one who oversees this nation," Videl chuckled as he kept following them.

Their plan to keep the Union army busy worked really well. They managed to leave the capital city unnoticed, and for the commander, he managed to do his duty.

"I have unleashed them... I did what you were told me to do," the commander said as he looked at the carriage window where the mysterious figure was sitting in the dark inside the carriage.

"You did a good job. We will reward you plentifully once the Corrupted have harvested the corpses of the Union army," the mysterious figure responded.

The commander's face lit up and then lowered his head to show gratification at the mysterious figure. Suddenly the knights stopped moving and the horses were neighing, attracting his attention.

"What's going on? Why are we stopping?" The commander asked the knights at the front.

"Sir, there's someone ahead."

The commander furrowed his brows and rode his horse to the front to look at the person. He saw a knight from the South Neva Union standing tall on his own with the black sword stabbed to the ground. He didn't like what he was seeing, especially as the knight was so confident they were on their own.

"Kill him," the commander ordered the mages.

The mages pointed their staffs at the knight and cast fireballs at the knight without hesitation. The fireballs exploded and created a thick smoke, and they were convinced that the knight would die from it.

"Wait..." The commander raised his hand.

As they watched the smoke slowly dissipated, but suddenly the knight dashed in with a sword in his hands. They were shocked, but it was already too late to react since the knight had swung his sword, creating a powerful slash wave that cut the knights at the front line in half.

The commander managed to protect himself with Aura, but even so, his armor was in shambles and was thrown away from impact. He grunted in pain as he tried to stand up, but when he looked in front of him, he saw the knight single-handedly fought dozens of knights on his own. He was in disbelief when he saw how strong the knight was and how he could kill the knights with a single attack.

The mages tried to use wind and fire magic, but their spells couldn't hit him because the spells disappeared before they could hit the knight. They were in disbelief and didn't know what to do since both the knights and the mages couldn't do anything to him.

"We need to leave... don't let that guy reach near the carriage!" The commander ordered.

Some of the knights escorted the carriage away from the battlefield while the rest of them kept the knight busy. As the carriage was being escorted away from the battlefield, they saw flashes of lightning coming from behind them. When they looked back, they saw lightning bolts coming toward them and zapped them, creating chain reactions since they were wearing armor.

All the knights who escorted the carriage were burned to death, killing the horses and even breaking the carriage. The commander and the other knights were shocked by what they saw, and the fact the knight could create such a powerful spell as well.

"Who are you?" The commander asked nervously as he slowly got up and readied his stance.

Chapter 216 - 216: Covered in blood.

The commander was petrified when he looked at the dead bodies of his knights. He still couldn't believe it even though he saw everything that happened.

"I had thousands of soldiers... thousands..." The commander muttered, his eyes shook uncontrollably, and his pupils shrank. "He killed them... almost all of them..."

The commander watched the knight who massacred his whole army on his own. He watched his soldiers fight for their lives, but they weren't strong enough to live.

The knight used both swordsmanship and magic simultaneously to eliminate whoever was in front of him. His armor that was shiny silver had turned dark red and even dark brown as the blood oxidized. There wasn't a single scratch on his armor, showing the difference in level he was compared to them.

It had been an hour since they left the city, and they couldn't even get past that knight. Whoever tried to run would meet their death door faster. They were hopeless, and yet they didn't want to die, however, they were only prolonging their deaths.

They thought the knight would get exhausted after killing dozens of other knights. They thought he would get exhausted after killing hundreds. However, they were wrong, they were hoping for something that would never happen.

Each slash wave that the knight released, it killed four to five knights simultaneously. Each lightning, fire, and wind magic he used, he killed three to four knights.

"I have to run... I have to run..." The commander muttered repeatedly as he looked around, looking for a way to leave without getting killed.

The moment he said that, somehow the knight turned his head at him. The commander shrieked and fell to his back, losing all his strength to fear.

"I surrender..." The commander muttered. "I SURRENDER!" He yelled.

The moment the knights heard their commander had chosen to surrender, they slowly loosened up their grips on their weapons. They dropped their weapons as they went down to their knees, raising their hands.

The knight stopped swinging his sword and slowly lowered his weapon once he noticed they had surrendered. He then looked at the carriage where Videl was preventing the person inside from leaving.

The knight turned his head and saw Thalior and some of the Union knights approaching. He slowly cleaned his sword with water that appeared from his palm before he put his sword into the ring.

Thalior and the others were shocked by the number of dead bodies scattered on the field. The thick snowfield became red because of the blood of the fallen. The rancid smell was so overwhelming that the knights had to lift their helmets so their hands could cover their noses.

The commander turned around and immediately crawled toward Thalior.

"We surrender! Please spare our lives!" He begged in a shaky voice as he kept crawling toward Thalior.

Thalior looked down at the commander with a cold and stoic expression. He knew who released the Corrupted, he knew who ordered the knights to do that. He knew they were siding with demons.

"Your life is worthless, not even God will forgive you for what you have done to the innocent people," Thalior said coldly, and then looked at the knight. "Your death will be decided by him," he looked down at the commander as he took a few steps back.

The knight slowly walked toward the commander and pulled out his sword from thin air.

"No! Please, no!" The commander begged as he lowered his head to the ground.

The knight stabbed his sword into the commander's lower spine and twisted his sword. The commander screamed in pain, but then he was dragged forcefully by the sword in her lower spine.

He screamed and begged as his hands tried to hold onto something. He had never felt that kind of pain as the knight cut the commander's back open all the way to his nape.

The gruesomeness of the knight made Thalior pity the commander a little. But he knew that man deserved such pain because he had just made the people suffer and even killed them just so he could buy time to escape.

The knight kicked the commander, turning him over and lying on his back. The cold ice with the open wound on his back made it worse. His scream grew louder, but then the knight stabbed him right on the throat, crushing his windpipe.

The commander couldn't scream or breathe, killing him slowly and painfully. His soldiers were in tears out of fear, while some of them even screamed and hid their faces in the snow.

Thalior wished that he could see Rasmus's expression beneath the helmet. He wondered what kind of expression Rasmus made when he did that.

"Take them all back to the city..." Thalior ordered his knights.

The Union knights brought the remaining revolutionary army back to the city. Nobody chose to run away because their fates would be better if Thalior himself decided them.

The remaining knights collected the dead bodies to be burned. They had met the Corrupted, and they had to burn those dead bodies immediately before they would turn into one.

"That carriage, who's in there?" Thalior asked as he looked at the broken carriage.

"Who knows," Rasmus answered.

Thalior approached the carriage and opened the door to see the person inside. To his surprise, all he saw was a skinny middle-aged man with his eyes and mouth wide open.

"He's dead..." Thalior furrowed his brows, noticing the condition of the body to be bizarre as it had been drained until there was nothing left under its skin.

Rasmus didn't expect that Videl had disappeared, even though Videl was supposed to be in the carriage. Seeing the dead body's condition, it appeared that Videl had taken the soul of the man.

"He might be the one who brought the Corrupted here, or control them," Rasmus said as he removed his helmet. "You can interrogate them and find out the identity of this man."

"I'm planning to do so..." Thalior sighed as he took a step away from the carriage.

"I'm exhausted..." Rasmus muttered and lit the carriage on fire with his mere thoughts. "I'll wash myself and get a short rest..." he sighed and walked past Thalior.

"Yes, you deserve some rest, Count..." Thalior responded and watched Rasmus's armor, which was covered in blood.

Thalior glanced at the carriage for a moment before he watched his knights stack the dead bodies. He stayed behind and made sure all the bodies were burned into ashes.

Rasmus went inside a random house and immediately looked for something to drink. It didn't take a minute before Videl, Aris, and Javi came in and gathered in the living room.

"That was quite the show back there," Videl chuckled as he watched Rasmus drink water straight from the pot. "You killed 1,746 lives back there. You were like stomping on an ant's nest," he added.

"You got enough souls?" Rasmus asked as he removed his armor completely.

"That fills me up quite a lot," Videl grinned. "Feed me just like today every day, and I'll be able to do with that body that we discovered," he pointed out.

"How many lives exactly?" Rasmus asked and washed his face.

"Dozens of thousands," Videl answered as he stretched his arms.

"Then you should go to where the Alliance army and Servil faction are. You will get more," Rasmus approached the chair and sat down at the table. "You should go now before they burn the bodies."

"Sounds like a good idea..." Videl yawned as he walked toward the door. "I'll see you guys around," he said and then left.

Aris stared at Rasmus before she reached out her hand at him. Rasmus was confused for a moment before he realized what she wanted. He pulled out his sword and gave it to her so she could see the changes in his sword.

"Hmm, it's not just Videl that was having a feast, your sword seems to be satisfied by the amount of blood it has absorbed," Aris said and stared at the blade. "Your sword will be unbreakable if you keep taking lives like that," she added and gave the sword back to Rasmus.

"It won't be troublesome? You said it would affect the wielder eventually and become bloodthirsty," Rasmus asked and put the sword back into the ring.

"You're an Orthias. That won't affect you in the slightest," Aris shook her head. "Mine is starting to get stronger as well. The Corrupted that I killed, they were enough to make a change on my sword."

"Sounds great..." Rasmus yawned as he removed his ring. "You two did a great job. Everything went smoothly," he said as he stood up.

Aris and Javi nodded their heads, getting a fair share of fun.

"I might need to take a short nap. Wake me up if Thalior is looking for me," Rasmus yawned as he walked up the stairs, looking for a bed to sleep on.

Chapter 217 - 217: Silent night.

"Leader! We have breached the walls!"

Xena turned around and looked at the female knight. Xena was a bit surprised by the information and immediately went out of the tent to look.

The walls had been breached, torn down, and turned into rubble. The enemy army didn't stop bombarding the Servil faction army with arrows and boulders. It was similar to what happened to the Union army, but they came more prepared with magic tools that created unbreakable barriers.

The mages kept bombarding the walls, lowering the enemy's morale. Although the Servil faction was all-female soldiers, it didn't change the fact that they were as merciless as any powerful army. It would make civilians tremble in fear, and they would choose to surrender themselves without resisting.

"We have surrounded them, yes?" Xena asked as she looked at the other sides of the walls.

"Yes, leader. The enemy hasn't shown any sign of surrender, and we are waiting for your order."

"Let's enter the city, and make sure the enemy doesn't have a choice but to surrender or die," Xena said as she got on the horse and unsheathed her sword. "Be cautious of everyone's surroundings because we don't know if the enemy has sided with demons."

Xena charged down the hill, followed by the army's commanders. The moment her army saw her charge toward the city, they all shouted and followed her.

Once she went beyond the Mana barriers, arrows were shot from the wall at her. She easily blocked and repelled the arrows as she kept charging toward the city wall with the commanders.

As soon as they entered the city, a barricade of shields welcomed them. Xena tapped her horse's thigh with her foot, and the horse imbued itself with Aura. The horse charged through the knights and sent them all flying, unable to stop them.

Xena's horse was one of the extremely rare breeds that could be called a beast rather than an animal because of its ability to utilize Mana. Her horse was trained by an expert equestrian trainer who made the horse so strong and fast. The horse was worth more than a single big mansion because of its abilities.

As soon as Xena got surrounded by enemies, she jumped down from her horse and stabbed her sword into the ground. The shockwave was enough to knock them down, and that was when her commanders did the finishing move, trampling them with their horses.

She charged toward a big group of knights that were approaching her. She coated her sword with Aura and released a strong slash wave, breaking their weapons and armor. Once she got close, she swiftly slashed them before they could block all her attacks.

Her army entered the city from all directions at the same time and began to bombard the enemy with magic and arrows. The streets were filled with screams and shouts, destroying the enemy's force in a single swoop.

"Rescue and escort all the civilians! Don't harm any of them!" Xena shouted.

All the commanders rode their horses toward Xena at the crossroads, and then took different paths with their knights and mages following behind them.

It took them half a day to finally conquer the whole city, the enemy was completely defeated by the Servil faction army. Not a single Servil faction army was killed during the invasion. The Servil faction finally showed off their fangs, and how strong they were.

"Any sign of them?" Xena asked as she entered a meeting hall in the palace and stared at her commanders.

"There's no sign of demonic cults. We have interrogated the commander and the leader of the revolutionary army here as well. We are convinced that they have no connection to those demons or the emissary."

"We brought them to the brink of death, but they insisted that they had nothing to do with them. They even despised those demonic cults based on what they said."

"And you all believed them?" Xena asked as she stood at the table.

All the commanders nodded in unison. Xena didn't question their abilities to tell if someone had told the truth or not. After knowing this revolutionary party didn't have any connection with those demons, she was relieved.

"What should we do with them, leader?"

"Imprison them, and treat them with care. Treat the wounded, and try to gain more information about the other revolutionary parties," Xena answered as she sat down and leaned back. "Keep our eyes open, we don't know if there will be an attack from the other party or not. Don't forget to burn all the bodies," she added as she closed her eyes.

"Yes, leader, and please get some rest. We will send a message to the Alliance about our successful invasion."

All the commanders excused themselves and left the room, leaving Xena alone.

"This is still one of the many nations that we need to take care of..." Xena muttered as she lazily stared at the sunset. "I hope the others managed to eliminate the enemy..."

(At the same time, far south of South Neva.)

The city was devoured by the sea of fire, there were screams from all over the city. Dead bodies of knights from both the revolutionary army and the Alliance army filled the street. There was no sign of living, only crows and vultures on the roofs and city walls.

"Sir... undeads are everywhere... our fallen knights and the enemy's knights are coming back to life..."

"How did this happen?!" The Alliance general slammed his hand on the desk, enough to crack the sturdy and thick table. "We had 7,000 soldiers and we lost half of them?! And now they become undead?!" He gritted his teeth as he clenched his fists.

"General, we should fall back... We can stay here, and we can't lose the remaining army that we have."

"Nonsense! We had it! We took the city, and now we have to fall back?!" The general shouted.

"We don't have a choice, General. No living beings would dare to enter the city. We need to wait for reinforcement if we want to secure the city. We need more priests."

The general gritted his teeth once again, knowing that he had no choice. He decided to listen to the captains and ordered his army to fall back to the cities nearby.

After all the Alliance army abandoned the capital city, a person came out from a dark alley. He looked at the thousands of Corrupted roaming aimlessly around him.

The Corrupted suddenly stopped moving and slowly approached the man. They didn't show any hostility toward the man and gathered around him.

"Follow them, and kill them," the man said with a calm voice.

All the Corrupted heeded the man's order and began to march toward the east gate. The man watched the army of the dead from the top of the city wall, smiling in excitement.

However, the Corrupted stopped moving not long after they left the city. The man was confused until he saw a figure landed in front of the Corrupted. Not a single Corrupted move when they saw the figure.

In a matter of a second, the thousands of troops of the Corrupted collapsed. The man was shocked by what he had just seen. He blinked his eyes with a confused look until he realized all the Corrupted lost their souls, including the demons within the bodies.

"What's going on..." the man muttered as he leaned against the wall and looked at the Corrupted bodies.

"Thank you for gathering all of them," a cold and chilling voice whispered into the man's ear.

Before the man could turn around, he felt his life and soul were sucked forcefully. He couldn't move a muscle until he collapsed and died.

Videl licked his lips as he chuckled, and turned into a laughter that echoed throughout the night. His laugh echoed while he was no longer there, disappearing into the silent night.

Chapter 218 - 218: A powerful one.

Rasmus was awoken by the sound of chirping birds outside the window. He didn't expect him to be asleep for almost a whole day. Knowing that Aris didn't wake him up, it seemed that Thalior didn't want to disturb his sleep.

After he took a bath, he left the house wearing a black robe and a hood that covered his hair. He noticed how peaceful the city was, even though yesterday it became a battlefield.

"There are letters, from the Servil faction and the Alliance. Archduke Thalior wants you to see him in the palace once you're awake," Javi said and landed behind Rasmus. "Lady Aris is exploring the city, she said that she's bored."

"Just imagine her as a caged animal. She has never been into other places than her village. You don't need to report to me about her, she knows where to find us even if she got lost," Rasmus said as he fixed his hood to keep his hair hidden.

They went to the palace to meet with Thalior, interested in what the others were doing. When he turned to the corner in the hallway, he was surprised to see paladins along the hallway.

The paladins glanced at them with a suspicious look on their faces, especially that Rasmus wore a robe that hid his face and hair. The moment Rasmus pulled down his hood, they immediately averted their gazes.

"You didn't say anything about the Holy Nation, Javi," Rasmus muttered as he walked in the hallway.

"Her Holiness told me to keep it a secret from you. She wanted to surprise you. My apologies," Javi answered as he lowered his head.

Rasmus raised his brows, surprised that Astrea or the paladins could find Javi. He wondered how it happened, but at that moment, he chose to focus on meeting Astrea.

The paladin opened the door for Rasmus, and that was when he saw Thalior, Novia, Astrea, and the Archbishops in the parlor. Rasmus stood at the door until Thalior nodded his head at him.

"My, you have changed a lot, Count Blackheart," Astrea smiled gently at Rasmus. "It's almost a year since the last time we met."

"Your Holiness," Rasmus bowed his head. "Yes, and it was quite a meeting back then," he said.

"It was, you managed to fix the relationship between Saint Moriganne and Monica. You were amazing, your words touched my heart, and I still remember every word you said back then," Astrea chuckled as she slowly stood up and approached Rasmus.

"I did it for my students. They deserve to do it their way while at the same time following their predecessor," Rasmus answered and stared at Astrea who stood in front of him.

Astrea touched Rasmus's shoulder as she stared right into Rasmus's eyes. Everyone was baffled because it was a rare moment where Astrea would touch someone. It was believed that whoever got touched by her, they were blessed for life.

Rasmus could sense an unfamiliar energy that went into his body. He realized it was divine energy, however, he didn't know what Astrea was trying to do.

"Now I understand why Saint Moriganne said that you have dangerous thoughts. I can feel the deeds you have done..." Astrea said as she removed her hand from Rasmus's shoulder. "It's interesting and endearing," she smiled faintly.

"Your words are wasted on someone like me, Your Holiness. Both for my own good and yours," Rasmus smiled at Astrea.

Astrea nodded with understanding, knowing that Rasmus didn't buy her compliments. She then signaled him to sit with the rest at the table.

"Since my time is short, let us hear about the situation here, Your Grace," Astrea looked at Thalior as she sat down.

Thalior revealed the situation that the Servil faction handled. Xena managed to gather enough information to crack the alliance between the Revolutionary parties.

Xena found out that there were parties that had decided to side with the demons and the emissary. More than half of the parties had chosen to become vessels for the emissary because they believed him as the savior.

Xena also found out that those parties that didn't choose to cooperate with the demons and the emissary had lost their influence among their peers.

"With that being said, if we played the cards right, we can persuade them to join us. We will listen to their demands and we will do our best to satisfy them," Thalior said as he looked at Rasmus and Astrea. "Is it achievable, Count?" He asked.

"I sense pride from them, and I'm not sure if they can hurt their pride to get rid of their purpose and submitting to the people they're trying to against," Rasmus answered as he looked at the letter.

Thalior, Astrea, and Novia thought about what Rasmus said. His words held a strong stance that was hard to argue because he was right about it.

"We can compromise our goal and theirs at the same time, making a deal where both sides can gain something from this," Rasmus suggested as he leaned back and stared at Thalior.

"Compromise? Like what for example?" Thalior asked with his brows furrowed.

"If the Servil faction can become a neutral party that doesn't follow the rules from the South Neva Union, why can't they? Give them freedom while at the same time power as well," Rasmus tilted his head. "Give them a piece of land like the Servil faction. We give them land to rule and we regain the land they have invaded," he continued.

"In the long run, if we are on their good side, they will become an ally of the South Neva Union. After all, you and the others want a better world of the people," Rasmus said.

"And we will eradicate the remaining revolutionary parties that have sided with demons and the emissary," Astrea added to Rasmus's words. "I don't see a problem with that solution, but again, the decision is yours, Your Grace."

"I would love to do that, but at the moment, South Neva is led by us, the South Neva Union and the Alliance. It requires their agreement for this to happen," Thalior clasped his hands and placed them in front of his face. "It's both easy and not to do at the same time."

"Leave that part to me, Your Grace. My purpose here is to see how the Alliance plays this whole situation," Astrea assured with a gentle smile.

"Speaking of the Alliance..." Thalior pulled out the letter. "Something weird happened there..."

Astrea read the letter out loud, letting Rasmus and Novia hear the content of the letter.

The letter stated about the situation that had happened down south. They were surprised by how bad the situation over there was. The sighting of the undead took over the capital city and they also lost more than 4,000 soldiers.

The most shocking part of the letter was when they mentioned the death of the undead. They speculated that the undead was about to invade the nearby cities that the Alliance had occupied, but the undead died mysteriously.

"Those weren't undead, Your Holiness, those were Corrupted," Thalior said with a serious expression.

Based on the description that the Alliance gave in the letter, they were convinced that it was indeed Corrupted. To imagine there were thousands of Corrupted, it brought bad memories to Novia, Astrea, and Thalior. They remembered how powerless they were in the presence of the Corrupted that even Swordmasters and Paladins struggled to fight them.

"You're saying there's someone out there who could kill thousands of Corrupted in a single night? And not to mention they died and didn't come back to life?" Astrea furrowed her brows, staring right into Thalior's eyes. "Are you sure it wasn't Lady Aris, Count?" She looked at Rasmus.

"No, Your Holiness, Aris was with me last night," Rasmus shook his head.

"I couldn't believe it either, Your Holiness. We all have shared the same experience in dealing with the Corrupted. The only thing that could kill them would be a powerful divine energy that only the saints possessed. To think that there's someone out there who could kill the Corrupted so easily, that person would be stronger than anyone in this world," Thalior answered as he rubbed his chin, unsettled by that fact.

"Whoever that might be, we need to find out who they are," Novia looked at Thalior and Astrea.

"I agree, and I think it's time for me to make a move, Your Grace. I will go there personally to check what was going on and check if what they said in the letter to be the truth," Astrea said as she stood up and looked at the Archbishops behind her. "We will take our leave," she said and then left the room.

Rasmus and the others watched Astrea and all the paladins leave the palace.

"Who do you think that might be, Count?" Thalior asked as he looked at Rasmus.

"I don't know, Your Grace. I have never seen anyone that powerful, and I know for sure that it wasn't Aris who did that," Rasmus answered, pretending not to know that the one who did that was Videl.

Chapter 219 - 219: Burden and Sacrifice.

A week had passed since they took over the three nations. The news had spread all across South Neva, but the news about Corrupted was left out because they didn't want to bring fear to the people.

Their valid reason was that they didn't want to make those demons and the emissary take extreme measures. They didn't want them to feel pressured or to feel like they needed to use their last resort to take over South Neva.

"A letter just came in," Thalior sat down across the table from Rasmus. "Her Holiness has identified the undead, and they are indeed Corrupted just like the one that we encountered beyond the Blackcliffs."

"There was no sign of divine energy being used over there, which means whoever killed those Corrupted, they weren't using divine power to kill them," Thalior continued as he sighed.

"This is a big mystery, and whoever did that, we need them on our side," Thalior muttered under his breath.

Rasmus wondered how Astrea couldn't trace demonic energy there. Since it was Videl who killed the Corrupted, there should be a trace of demonic energy. However, since Astrea didn't feel any demonic energy, it was a good thing for him.

"Did you know that Princess Anastasha is here in South Neva?" Rasmus tried to change the topic since he wasn't interested in something that he already knew.

"Princess Anastasha? You mean the Princess from the Asghar family?" Thalior furrowed his brows.

"You didn't know? I met her in person a while back. I met her not long after I asked for your recommendation letter for Commander Arka," Rasmus answered.

"Where?!" Thalior leaned his body forward and stared intensely at Rasmus.

"Far west, Bastios Kingdom," Rasmus answered, furrowing his brows. He never saw Thalior to be on the edge from hearing Anastasha in South Neva. "Seeing you react like that, it seems that she really came here without anyone knowing."

Thalior immediately calmed himself down, realizing he had shown unsightly behavior. He slowly leaned back and rested his arms on the armrests as he was deep in thoughts.

"We heard Bastios Kingdom is one of the few kingdoms left that's still fighting against the revolutionary parties. If Her Highness is still there, we need to assist her," Thalior rubbed his chin as he spoke.

"I believe Commander Arka already knows about her existence. You should ask the fleet to support the Bastios Kingdom. Although I'm sure he already sent people to protect the kingdom," Rasmus said as he crossed his arms.

Thalior hummed and nodded, realizing that Arka was capable of doing so. He wondered why an Asghar family member had decided to hide in South Neva. There were so many possibilities as to why Anastasha decided to stay there.

"So you have met her in person, Count?" Thalior was worried after knowing Rasmus and Anastasha had met.

"I did. I saved her life once, and then I met her for the second time, knowing each other," Rasmus nodded.

Thalior didn't like the fact that Rasmus had met with Anastasha. He knew a lot about the Asghar family, in fact, he had met with all of them. Every single one of them was a talented schemer, and they were dangerous people.

Suddenly, someone knocked on the door, snapping Thalior back to reality.

"Your Grace, a letter from Commander-in-Chief."

Thalior received the letter and read it thoroughly. The content was about the border that had been expanded after the success of invasions toward the revolutionary army.

Uriel and all the South Neva Union knights were coming in three days along with reinforcements from the Alliance. The situation on the east side was still under control with no sign of demons or demonic cult members.

"The representatives from the Alliance are on their way to the Caldara Kingdom, where the Servil faction is. We will depart there tomorrow morning," Thalior said as he put down the letter.

"So we will discuss the next move? That's faster than we thought," Rasmus asked with his brows raised. "Looks like with Here Holiness on their side, they become confident again even though they lost quite a lot of forces."

"It appears so," Thalior nodded. "With Her Holiness on their side, it also helps us control their influence and their greed," he added.

"Well then, I'll enjoy my time here for one last time..." Rasmus said as he stood up and then left the room.

Rasmus went to the monastery where the wounded were being treated. He saw Daryus talking with a wounded knight on the bed, smiling and laughing. He stayed at the door, observing the knights who got badly injured during the war that had felt better.

Daryus noticed Rasmus at the door, wearing a black robe and a hood that covered his hair. He excused himself after he treated the knight and went to speak with Rasmus.

"Heard you're well-liked among the soldiers. Your way to treat them and listen to their problems makes you their favorite," Rasmus said as he leaned his shoulder against the door.

"I only did what I believe is best for them. Sometimes it's not the physical wounds that hurt them, but the scars from within," Daryus said as he turned around and looked at all the knights being treated by physicians and priests. "These guys are really strong, mentally, but to lose their fallen brothers, it still

hurts them. They can't bring the bodies of their fallen brothers back to their families which is devastating."

"They know the risk, and their families as well. It's not that they regret it, it's because it's not them who died instead of their brother in arms," Rasmus said as he crossed his arms.

"Yes, the guilt is consuming them slowly. Time might heal, but we are at war right now. I have to keep their guilt at bay for now," Daryus nodded in agreement. "Anyway, I heard about what you did during the war..." he said as he stared at Rasmus.

"And?" Rasmus stared back at Daryus with a stoic and cold expression.

Daryus couldn't believe that Rasmus had single-handedly killed more than a thousand soldiers. It was something that came out of a fantasy book, a hero or a villain depending on the context.

"Do you have any guilt from that?" Daryus asked even though he already knew the answer.

"No," Rasmus answered without hesitation.

Daryus expected Rasmus to make a justification for his answer, but he didn't. He was trying to understand Rasmus better, and he slowly began to piece the puzzle of Rasmus's mind.

"Keep doing this and you'll become the person you want to be. However, I doubt you can stay the same after what you have seen and will see from this war," Rasmus said as he pushed himself from the door. "I'll see you around," he said and then left the monastery.

Daryus had seen the Corrupted with his own eyes, and the evil that lurked in the shadows. The evil that could and would erase humanity in this world, and everyone would witness their cruelty and the chaos they made. He knew that humanity needed to survive, and righteousness alone wouldn't be enough.

"Now I understand why Archduke Thalior and even Her Holiness need someone like him at this moment..." Daryus muttered as he watched Rasmus walk away. "Someone that can remind them of reality in their minds."

"The luxury of comfort and choices will soon be gone. Survival trumps ideals and beliefs..." Daryus said under his breath as he walked back to treat the knights. "The ones who fought for humanity, only a few could enjoy it."

"The good are sacrificed while the bad reap everything..." Daryus wiped his teary eyes with the back of his hand. "Oh, heroes of humanity, you'll be long forgotten, and your sacrifice might not change anything. This world doesn't deserve all of you..." His voice trembled as tears fell to his chin.

Once he calmed himself down and tried to think positively, he went back to help the knights who were still having a breakdown. He heard their pain of losing their brothers in arms, and the burden they had carried. The long forgotten trauma of losing someone important came back to them unfiltered.

The pain of the people who were willing to sacrifice themselves for the greater good, were hidden under the roof of a monastery. A small dot in a vast world, unnoticed by the people. Only one person understood them, and he had to carry that burden on himself.

Chapter 220 - 220: Out of place.

They arrived at the Caldara Kingdom, and the peaceful atmosphere was different than what Thalior and Rasmus had expected. The people who used to support the revolutionary parties had decided to submit themselves to the Servil faction. It was all because of the leadership of Xena Servil, the woman who was capable of making a better world.

Aris and Javi didn't come with Rasmus and stayed behind to prevent the enemy or the demons from taking advantage of the situation. It assured Thalior that there was nothing to worry about with both Aris and Javi back there.

"She might be the answer to our concern, Count. She might be capable of persuading the revolutionary parties who are against the demons and the emissary," Thalior said as he looked out the carriage window.

"Don't try to burden your responsibility to those who have no desire. You're only going to push them away," Rasmus responded with his eyes closed, enjoying the smooth road. "The Servil faction wants nothing, and even if she has something that she wants, Queen Amalfrida has prepared it for her. After all, those two are friends," he pointed out.

Thalior knew that Rasmus was right, and he also knew that as well. He had never spouted something that came out of his mind without a second thought before. He realized that having Rasmus around made him feel a bit comfortable. It was because Rasmus didn't judge, he only stated the truth.

"Let's stick with the plan, compromise our goal, and the revolutionary parties that are against demons. Listen to their demands and try to fulfill them as long as they're reasonable. We don't need them, that's a fact, but you don't want it to feel bitter, and it's your decision," Rasmus said as he slowly opened his eyes and looked at the people walking on the sidewalk.

"You're only being considerate when it won't change anything, don't you, Count?" Thalior raised his brows, staring at Rasmus.

"I never overcomplicated things nor do I oversimplify anything," Rasmus responded as he looked at the palace in the distance where the meeting was planned to be held.

"I have never asked this question before, and I know that it has something to do with your past when the whole world doesn't treat you like a human being..." Thalior paused to form a sentence without trying to be disrespectful. "Do you despise people, Count?"

"I don't despise those who are innocent, Your Grace. However, my hatred toward the ones who are responsible for my suffering, the innocent will always be the one who pays the price," Rasmus answered as he stared at Thalior. "However, I never bothered to listen to what people say about me. It's not out of ignorance or anger, it's because I had enough."

"So you don't actually hate people? You just don't want to involve yourself with them because of your detachment? If so, why did you have someone like Carrion and Daryus, Count?" Thalior crossed his arms and furrowed his brows.

"It's better to have people who care about the world on my side, no? Would you prefer me to have more people like Aris and Javi, Your Grace?" Rasmus asked back with a cold gaze.

Thalior realized he was prying too deep into Rasmus's business and had crossed the line. He immediately shook his head and decided to not answer the question to respect Rasmus's privacy.

"We have arrived..." Thalior looked out the window as the carriage entered the palace area.

"A word of advice, Your Grace. I did say that you shouldn't pressure Xena, but your ideals and hers might align. Try not to persuade her, try to make her understand," Rasmus said as he fixed his suit.

"Thank you for the heads-up, Count," Thalior nodded with understanding.

They walked out of the carriage and already saw dozens of carriages that belonged to different nations based on the flags they represented. They saw a few carriages that belonged to the Holy Nation, and they knew that Astrea was already there with the others.

They were escorted by the knights into the spacious hall where everyone was gathered. They didn't expect it would look like a banquet since there was food and drink on the tables.

"I guess it's fine to loosen up a bit for everyone..." Thalior muttered under his breath and began to greet everyone.

Rasmus took a glass of wine and decided to distance himself from everyone. He preferred to enjoy the food rather than with the people.

"You're not going to speak or socialize with them?" Novia approached Rasmus with a glass of wine in her hand.

Rasmus glanced at Novia, who seemed to be out of place, just like him. He knew that she didn't know anyone since she spent her whole life in the Magic Tower, learning and working under Lenin's guidance.

"You can stay here with me if you don't know where to go. After all, you approached me because you don't have anywhere to go," Rasmus said and took a sip of his wine.

Novia should have known that Rasmus could read her like an open book. She couldn't argue since the only people she knew were Thalior and Astrea, who were busy talking with people in the hall.

"That's the case for me, but you should have known these people since you have been in South Neva for almost a year," Novia stared at Rasmus and took a sip of her wine.

"And you believe that if I go over there, I won't make a scene? I'm distancing myself because I don't want to waste my time and to make the South Neva Union look bad," Rasmus explained as he turned around and leaned against the table. "You can look at those people. They're wagging their tails, treating this situation like an opportunity to gain recognition from Her Holiness rather than dealing with the issue," he continued with his arms crossed, observing the people in expensive attire, faking their laughter and smiles.

"Opportunist to the core..." Novia sighed as she nodded. "Got myself a fair share since I'm Great Sage's disciple," she muttered.

"And you can't blame them for being like that. Not everyone is fated to be a part of the world, some are born barely with any influence," Rasmus said and took a sip of his wine, and then noticed that Xena was approaching him.

"Yeah, but they should know the time and place to do that," Novia muttered and stared at the nobles with a cynical gaze.

Xena noticed Novia's cold gaze toward the nobles, and when she glanced at Rasmus, he only gave her a faint smile as he sipped his wine. She decided to join them because somehow she felt like she belonged with them.

"Count Blackheart, Lady Novia," Xena bowed her head at them.

"My Lady," Novia bowed her head at Xena while Rasmus nodded at Xena.

"Whose idea was it to make this meeting into a banquet?" Rasmus asked Xena with his brows raised.

Xena stared at Duke Gerald, the same person who was one of the representatives who came to South Neva Union headquarters back then. Rasmus nodded slowly as he took a sip of his wine, not making it obvious to those who were staring at him. He then grabbed a glass of wine from the table and offered it to her.

"Thank you, Count," Xena grabbed the wine and decided to stand beside him. "I heard that your side encountered the Corrupted, and Lady Aris dealt with them."

"Yes, we have someone who's capable of dealing with such a threat," Rasmus nodded. "You're quite lucky, unlike the Alliance forces that almost got wiped out by the Corrupted."

"Yes, but it won't be a problem anymore because Her Holiness is going to let her three Archbishops stay here to help us deal with the next revolutionary party that we are going to invade," Xena said and took a sip of the wine, surprised by how smooth it was. "Her Holiness will help the Alliance from now on, so there should be no problem on their side either," she continued.

"Count, there's something that quite bothers me," Xena cleared her throat as she faced Rasmus. "We found records of this nation in the treasury room, and there's one record that has some kind of information about certain organizations that have existed here, in South Neva," she said with a serious expression.

"And what bothers you?" Rasmus asked.

"There's a location where they gathered since the former royal family of this nation was a part of it. We went to check it out two days ago, but that area was surrounded by bandits. We believed that the place had something to do with a demonic cult. We didn't want to risk it to check that place, so if you're interested, we can go there tomorrow," Xena answered.

"I see, let's do that," Rasmus nodded. "Are you coming, Lady Novia?" He looked at Novia with his brows raised.

"Yes, of course," Novia nodded.