

Evil 231

Chapter 231 - 231: A Demon King.

"You even disintegrated their remaining souls within those corpses..." Videl crouched as she stared down at the pile of dust in the center of the crater.

Videl thought that Aris was strong, but she never thought that a dragon in this world possessed such power. She realized that a dragon could kill her in her prime, and that was disturbing for her.

"If you don't change to your usual appearance, I'll make you experience what they felt right now," Aris said as she stood behind Videll, staring down at her.

Videl sighed as she raised her hands, and suddenly a black mist covered her whole body. The moment the mist disappeared, he turned into his butler and handsome appearance.

"Seriously, what's your problem?" Videll asked as he crossed his arms and stared at Aris with his brows furrowed.

"Your voice was annoying," Aris answered as she walked away. "At least don't become a woman," she added.

Videl was speechless and annoyed by the fact that Aris was being a pain because of a mere voice. He sighed and decided to brush it off while Rasmus stared at him with a smirk, enjoying every second of it.

Rasmus looked at the damage that Aris had caused, and wondered how she did it. His control over Aura was still nowhere near her, and it would take him a lot of effort to even manipulate it outside his body. He wondered if meditating and trying to sharpen his mind would help him achieve what Aris showed earlier.

"(I could control Mana easily now, but not Aura...)" Rasmus looked at his hand and felt the Mana lingering in between his fingers. "(Once Mana turned into Aura, it might not have free will anymore. So I have to be the one controlling it with my mind or even beyond that. Perhaps my consciousness, like a psychic?)" he thought.

"Let's get rid of their hideout. It's in that building over there," Videl said as he pointed at the building in front of him.

Rasmus snapped back to reality and stared at the old building that Videl was pointing at. He watched Videl walk ahead of them to check on the building first. He looked over his shoulder at the crater and still couldn't grasp what he had witnessed earlier.

The hideout was hidden in the basement of the house. It had a few records there, including tools for rituals and skinned heads of the villagers. The records weren't important, but they found out the warlock they saw earlier was the village chief, pretending to be a wise old man.

"Hmm, so it was he who summoned those demons. Funny that they allowed an old man like him to order them around," Videl said as he looked at the ritual circle on the ground. "Hmm, wait a minute. This circle is imperfect, it shouldn't be able to summon anything..." he muttered.

Since Videl had learned from warlocks and witches, he knew everything about the dark arts. He realized something was off about this, and immediately looked for faint traces of demonic energy that still lingered.

"Put your helmet on, all of you," Videl said with a serious expression as black mist covered his body.

Without questioning Videl, the three of them put on their helmets. Videl changed his appearance into an old priest while everyone looked at her with a curious look. Suddenly, he punched the ground, cracking it, and ripped the ground open until they saw a faint dark purple glow from underneath.

"I knew it, this thing is the one that summoned all the demons," Videl muttered as he slowly took a step away from the ritual circle and stared down at the glowing light.

"What's that?" Rasmus asked.

"You can say it's a portal that only Fallen Watchers can create from wherever they want that connects with their minions," Videl answered as he formed a ball made of white light on his palm. "I'm going to try to break this thing off, and there's a chance a powerful demon will appear to prevent me from doing so," he said as he stared at the ball of light on his palm.

"Wait, what? Is that divine energy?" Rasmus stared at the ball of light in disbelief, similar to what he saw when Astrea used her divine powers.

Aris and Javi were mildly shocked by what they saw, they were as shocked as Rasmus. Aris could see the divine energy that lingered within Videl's body that suddenly existed. She couldn't believe what she saw, but she remembered that Ermaine, the false prophet that she saw back then was also capable of doing so.

"What? Surprised that I can hold both divine energy and demonic energy? By now, you should have expected for me to be capable of doing this," Videl smirked at Rasmus as he threw the ball of light at the emitting purple light on the ground.

As soon as the ball made contact with the light, the whole ground trembled and cracked open. The light grew brighter, and suddenly, a hand appeared from the light, climbing out of it from thin air. It was as Videl said, a portal, and something crawled from it.

The thing that came out of the portal was a knight in jet-black armor with rough and pointy edges. The armor that didn't look like from the world of the living because it was covered in black tar that dripped to the ground and melted the wooden floor. It was different from what Rasmus encountered back then, and it looked a lot stronger.

Aris didn't hesitate to raise her sword and swung it upward vertically at the knight. Her attack cut the ceiling of the basement open all the way to the roof. The knight was thrown away by her attack, but the knight survived with a big crack in his armor. The knight used his hand to brush on the damage on his armor, and surprisingly the armor regenerated from his touch.

Aris didn't encounter something like that back when she explored the Blackcliffs. It was different from the possessed and the corrupted that she had encountered so far. The knight oozed an overwhelming demonic energy that sucked all the Mana around him, turning it into his strength.

"That's a king rank demon," Videl grinned in excitement as he stared at the knight. He couldn't wait to devour a Demon King and made himself into a Demon King, one step away from reaching his goal.

Rasmus knew that he wouldn't stand a chance against something like that even if he pushed himself to the limit. His effort would be futile in the presence of that knight in front of him.

The knight's eyes glowed dark red under the helmet with horns. He controlled the tar all over his armor and moved them toward his right hand. Once all the tar formed around his hand, it slowly formed into a greatsword and hardened into a solid form. He swung his sword toward them, releasing a powerful slash wave of demonic energy.

Aris thrust the air with her sword, and it released a powerful shockwave that turned everything in front of her into dust. That move was enough to disperse the slash wave that the knight had released, and it also hurt him to the point that his armor broke into pieces, revealing its skin that was as dark as a coal.

The knight roared, releasing a deafening and ear-piercing soundwave at them. Rasmus and Javi almost fainted as their ears began to ring painfully, making them fall to their knees and cover their ears. The knight pushed out the black wings from its spine and then flew to the sky, making a distance from Aris.

Aris and Videl jumped out of the basement and went outside to look at the knight in the sky. They watched as the trees and the soil in a mile's radius dried out because the knight took the life out of them. The amount of Mana that he absorbed was immensely large that he could suck the lives of thousands of lives in a matter of a second.

"Finally, something that I can play with," Aris said as she held her sword with both hands and stomped the ground to ready her stance.

Her stomp alone was enough to crack the ground around the village, and when she deepened her footing, some of the buildings collapsed and sunk into the ground. She created a small avalanche as her eyes stared coldly at the knight in the sky.

"Take those two away from this village. I'm not going to hold back in this fight," Aris said with a serious expression, her eyes never leaving the knight.

Videl glanced at Aris and wondered what kind of expression she had underneath that helmet. He then nodded and hurriedly went back to the basement to bring Rasmus and Javi away from the village. The knight didn't even bother to attack Videl because he knew the real threat was the knight on the ground below him.

Once Aris felt that Rasmus was out of the village, she finally could release all her strength.

"Get down here," Aris said coldly.

The knight felt a mountain fall onto his back and make him fall to the ground so hard that the whole village sunk to the ground. She was floating in the air as she stared down at the knight who struggled to stand up from that pressure alone. She then felt an immense amount of demonic energy that was released from the knight's body, dispersing the Aura she had put on him.

The knight slowly got back to his feet and looked up at Aris with his glowing red eyes.

"Let's see how strong you are," Aris pointed her sword down at the knight.

Chapter 232 - 232: Good and Bad.

"Haah... Khu-hu-hu..." Videl chuckled with his hand grasped onto his mouth, trying to suppress his excitement. "Hahaha! This is it! This is what I want to see!" He yelled, glaring at the shockwave coming toward him, and hit him, sending him flying.

Rasmus and Javi's eyes were wide open, their mouths had never been closed ever since the fight began. They had never seen such destructive power that destroyed everything to small particles. The hills that made the land look stunning had been turned into a flattened and barren land.

Each shockwave that was released scraped the land little by little. Dozens of shockwaves were released every second because of the clash between Aris and the Demon King. Nobody could survive if they were too close to them, not even Rasmus's Mana barriers.

Every time the Demon King was sent to the ground, the land collapsed. The landscape was slowly turning into a big valley because of the fight. Slowly but surely, the area where Rasmus was standing would become high ground.

The Demon King finally realized that he was no match for the mysterious knight he faced. He decided to fly away to report this matter, but suddenly he felt a presence behind him, and his wings got cut off from his spine.

The Demon King screeched as he fell from the sky, but then he blazed the sky with hellfire that he had released from his body. However, he was shocked that Aris wasn't affected by the hellfire, not even the ordinary armor she wore, thanks to the Aura she coated around her body.

The Demon King sucked the hellfire onto his palm and re-released it right onto Aris's face. He thought it would be enough to distract her, but once again, he was shocked that she could cut the hellfire and even extinguish it with every swing of her sword.

The Demon King knew that he had no chance of escaping from Aris's grasp. He landed and regenerated his wings slowly as he glared at Aris from underneath his helmet.

Aris landed not far from the Demon King and readied her stance immediately. She dashed and swung her sword relentlessly at the Demon King, clashing her sword with the Demon King's sword. The Demon King could match her speed, but not her strength.

The Demon King controlled hellfire like a cloth that he could swing and pull with his hand. Everything melted when it made contact with the hellfire, and yet it couldn't melt Aris's armor and sword.

Aris clashed her sword with the Demon King's sword, noticing how durable her sword was even after everything it had gone through. However, she was also surprised that the Demon King's sword could withstand all of her attacks, even though it regenerated like how the Demon King regenerated his armor and limbs.

At this point, it was a matter of endurance and which one was the last one to stand.

"I could barely see their attacks..." Rasmus muttered as he watched Aris and the Demon King's hands, which looked blurry whenever they released an attack.

"There are only a handful of humans that could be a match of this demon. However, we don't know how many demons that are on the same level as him," Javi responded as he watched the Demon King's wide wings terrorize him.

"At least a thousand," Videl answered as he climbed the hill where Rasmus and Javi were. "And the more they feed on the living, the stronger they become," he added.

Javi turned around to look at Videl's condition, surprised that Videl was fine even after getting hit by that powerful shockwave. He then thought about what Videl said, the numbers of Demon Kings and their potential of growing stronger were unsettling.

"Humankind is doomed," Videl chuckled as he watched the Demon King get sent flying by Aris's attack and hit the ground, collapsing it even further. "At least that's how it should be," he grinned as he stared at Aris, who had decided to put more effort into the fight.

Aris held her sword with both hands and swung it downward two times, creating a cross slash wave. The Aura that she produced was visible to the naked eye, a light blue light coated the cross slash wave.

The slash wave cut through the thick and hardened soil like butter. The Demon King got hit by it and went further down into the ground that was being obliterated by the slash wave. The Demon King's armor shattered into pieces, revealing his bare skin that was being torn and ripped apart by the slash wave.

"It's over," Videl giggled as he jumped down and ran to the scene to devour the Demon King's energy.

Rasmus and Javi followed Videl from behind and went down to the valley. They looked around and couldn't believe the hills and the vast land had been turned into a new terrain. The village had disappeared with no trace of it left, not even a chunk of the wall of a building survived.

Videl looked down at the abyss and didn't hesitate to jump down to devour the Demon King's energy. Rasmus and Javi were standing on the edge, staring into the pitch black abyss where they couldn't see the bottom of it.

Aris landed behind Rasmus and slowly removed her helmet. She didn't even break a sweat or catch a breath after the intense battle against a Demon King. She looked down and saw the demonic energy weakening, a sign of the demon had lost the fight and his life.

"The sword is amazing," Aris mentioned as she lifted her sword and observed the blade with barely any scratches on it. "I thought this would break in the middle of the fight, but I was wrong," she said as she stabbed the sword on the ground.

"I'm glad the sword's quality is beyond your expectations," Rasmus glanced at the sword. "How was it, fighting a Demon King?" He looked at Aris's face.

Aris slowly formed a smile on her face as she looked at Rasmus, a satisfied expression painted her face.

"It was fine, but I was hoping that he was at least ten times stronger than that," Aris answered as she looked down at the abyss.

Ramus and Javi stared at Aris for a whole ten seconds without saying a word. They could finally imagine how strong she could be by imagining what they had seen but multiplied by ten. Javi couldn't imagine how destructive it would be, however, Rasmus could imagine it. He could imagine it, and the closest scenario he could imagine would be a nuclear war.

"What a shame..." Videl landed behind them with a disappointed expression. "Aris got rid eighty percent of that demon's life. So I could only devour the remaining twenty percent," he sighed as he rested his hands on his waist.

"That's still a big amount, more than the Duke you devoured back then?" Rasmus turned around and looked at Videl.

"One and a half, to be precise," Videl nodded as he sat down. "But I realized now that I might not be able to devour a Demon King. I would lose control, and the Demon King that I would have devoured would be the one controlling me and devoured me instead," he said as he pressed his chest, struggling to maintain the Demon King energy within his body.

"So you're not strong enough. You should be grateful that Aris left some of the Demon King's life and didn't kill him completely," Rasmus said as he pulled out the map from his ring. "And what about this whole thing? Do you think Kiel or Yaza will know about the death of a Demon King?" He glanced at Videl.

"No, they won't know until they notice that the Demon King they sent doesn't come back to their side. Which means, there's a chance that they will come to check. When they find out that someone killed a Demon King rank, they might look for the one who killed it," Videl answered as he looked at Aris.

"I see, that means we need to stay low for now because of this. We also just made the demon forces from making a move, which means we are going to see more of them from now on. That's a good and bad thing to have," Rasmus muttered as he looked at the map. "The good thing is that we might be able to lure one of the emissaries to us, and let Aris deal with them, weakening them. The bad thing is that they will see us as a real threat, all of us, the Alliance and the South Neva Union, giving them a reason to be cautious and take extreme measures to achieve their goals," he explained as he rolled the map and looked at the three of them.

"Well? Don't you think this will make things more interesting?" Videl smirked as he stared at Rasmus. "Isn't this basically bringing all the chaos all-together in a single moment, fastening the process of what we came for and make things easier for you?" He asked as a grin formed on his face.

Rasmus looked to the side, thinking about it for a moment. He began to nod his head as a smirk formed on his face.

"You're right, let's make it interesting," Rasmus said with a smile on his face.

Chapter 233 - 233: The Corrupted Grace.

Kiel walked down the stairs toward the dark basement in his long white robe with gold motives, his porcelain mask covering his face and the hood that covered his hair. He was followed by two knights in jet-black armor, the same knights that Aris fought. The moment he walked into the complete darkness, his glowing dark orange eyes became the only thing that was visible in the basement.

Kiel saw two knights standing in front of the door made of stone, preventing anyone from entering. He raised his right hand gracefully at them, and the knights immediately opened the heavy door for him. The ceiling and the ground were trembling when they opened the door, falling dust dirtied Kiel's robe, but he wasn't bothered by it.

As soon as the door was fully open, a bright purple light lit the room and the pungent smell of rotten flesh struck their noses. They were unbothered by the smell, especially Kiel, who wasn't fazed or shocked by the view of living humans being mutilated by a person in a blood-red robe with gold engravings.

Kiel stood at the door, didn't say a word, and watched as the person in a blood-red robe experimented on human bodies. He could see the humans' eyes were wide open, but their mouths were closed as if they were unable to move their muscles. Tears were falling to their cheeks, fear written on their faces as their bodies were being torn and ripped apart.

"To see you come all the way down here, there must be something important," the person in the blood-red robe said. The voice was deep, but distorted, making it hard to distinguish whether the person was a man or a woman.

Kiel slowly approached the person in the blood-red robe and stood beside them. He watched the humans placed and stacked on the table with their trembling eyes glaring at him. He could see the pain, fear, and hopelessness in their eyes, but he didn't care.

"Someone is hunting us down... successfully..." Kiel answered as he watched the person in the blood-red robe observe an arm and a leg in his hands to study them. "We need to make a move, Yaza. We don't have much time," he said as he put his hands behind his back.

Yaza's eyes glowed bright red underneath the porcelain mask he wore. The eyes grew wider, and it was enough to make all the humans faint out of fear.

"Didn't you say that no humans could stop us? Why is it the moment I have my time, you said something like this?" Yaza glared at Kiel, and his gaze alone was enough to crack the porcelain mask he wore.

Kiel stared back at Yaza, making the demon knights tremble in fear, and began to kneel with their heads lowered. Unlike Yaza, Kiel didn't harbor any emotion in his glowing eyes, and they reflected no fear or emotion.

"Because a Saint came here, that woman named Astrea," Kiel answered.

"She's a nobody, a mere human with a divine power, nothing more," Yaza sounded a bit annoyed by Kiel's excuse. "If you're trying to stop me from my own creation, I'll make sure that you'll be punished by our Master," he glared at Kiel as he leaned his face toward Kiel's face.

"She plays a small part of it, and I know that she's just God's favorite tiny toy. That's not the problem, but the force behind her," Kiel stared right into Yaza's glowing red eyes. "We lost a Duke, and a King. We both know that there's only a tiny portion of humans in this world that are capable of killing them. Who are they? We don't know, but as long as Astrea is here, they will keep hunting us down, successfully," he pointed out.

Yaza tilted his head like an owl, to the point that his head was almost upside down, but then he turned his head to look at the humans on his table.

"Someone is capable of killing a Duke? and a King?" Yaza's eyes glowed even brighter, but this time it wasn't anger, it was a thrill. "Wouldn't that be interesting if we captured whoever they were?" He menacingly and disturbingly tilted his head again as he glared at Kiel.

"You want me to send one of the Prime Lords to investigate? What if they ended up dead as well?" Kiel asked.

"Well? Wouldn't that be interesting? I'll personally look who it is and I can make something out of them," Yaza answered as he held a human's head by the hair and wiggled it around. "We only have a few Prime Lords here, losing one won't be a problem since we will get something in return," he glanced at Kiel as he threw away the head, believing it was defective compared to other human heads.

Kiel thought for a moment, realizing it wouldn't be a bad idea to let one Prime Lord cease to exist even though Prime Lords were fallen angels just like him and Yaza. With that outcome, whether they could capture the killer or not, or if the Prime Lord lived or died, it wasn't the main goal. He could deduct who was capable of killing a Prime Lord, and that would narrow it down to reveal the killer. He believed no

humans were capable of killing a Prime Lord, and only Orthias, the ancient race that was capable of doing so.

"Will you take responsibility for this decision, Yaza? Will you deal with our Master's wrath if this didn't go well?" Kiel asked calmly.

"I will," Yaza answered without hesitation as he stared right into Kiel's glowing orange eyes.

Kiel glanced at the human on the table that had regained consciousness. He stared at the man with his glowing orange eyes, and suddenly the man's eyes turned white as his whole body twitched uncontrollably. He then brushed his hand under the white glove on the man's head, taking the man's soul and killing him painlessly.

"How's the progress to create a Nephilim, Yaza?" Kiel asked as he stared at the man's soul in his hand and inhaled it.

"This thing called Mana, it's the only thing that prevents me from finishing my experiment. It's too complicated, unlike the humans from Earth..." Yaza answered as he pulled the man's dead body from the pile and ripped the skin off like peeling a banana. "Everything looks the same, but different..." he muttered as he stared at the anatomy of the man's skinless body.

"Didn't our Master have that woman, Illidan?" Kiel stared at the man's body. "She holds knowledge about this world since she's an Orthias, an ancient race of this world," he took the man's body from Yaza's hand, putting his hand on the man's mouth, putting demonic energy into the body.

"Maybe it really isn't that simple to understand," Yaza responded and watched the body turn into a Corrupted. "The situation over there is more problematic, isn't it? The North really put their fight against our Master, which is quite commendable," he pointed out and continued to mutilate the human bodies on his table.

"Maybe it is..." Kiel muttered as he stared down at the Corrupted that knelt in front of him. "However, we really don't have time for your experiment, Yaza. We need more army," Kiel glanced at the bodies on the table, thinking that he could be more useful than being lab rats for Yaza.

"Use those humans called revolutionaries that have bowed down under your rule. Aren't they enough for an army?" Yaza glanced at Kiel, reading Kiel's thoughts beneath that mask he wore. "Don't touch my toy, you already have your own toy," he warned.

"We have a feeling that nothing will be enough..." Kiel said as he turned around and stared at the demon knights. "Something is amiss, and I don't know what..." he muttered and decided to walk away from the table.

"Amiss? Even for all of you?" Yaza looked at Kiel from over his shoulder, the body that was possessed by a few Fallen Watchers inside it.

Kiel didn't say a word, his gaze was pointed at the spot on the floating purple flame on the wall. He couldn't find the reason behind his worries no matter how hard he tried.

"That human that you spoke of, who was it again?" Yaza asked as he gently caressed a woman's face on his table, admiring her complexion and then turning into irritation. "Did you find him after he made a deal with you?" He asked as he crushed the woman's face, irritated by God's creation that he couldn't decipher.

"Rasmus Blackheart, that's his name," Kiel answered. "And no, I haven't seen him. Azel said that he was on the East Neva, but then he disappeared..." he continued and listened to the sound of a skull being crushed behind his ears.

"I want to meet him... I want to observe his body and mind..." Yaza muttered as he wiped the blood from his glove on the woman's body.

"We have something in common..." Kiel responded and then left the room.

Chapter 234 - 234: Two Snakes.

(At the royal family estate, the Bastios Kingdom)

Anastasha folded her hand fan as she listened to the mutters from behind her chair. She stared blankly at the door, sitting at her desk with the sunlight from the window behind her. She then looked at the scroll on her desk as she kept listening to the report.

"You may leave," Anastasha muttered.

A gentle gush of wind blew her hair as the presence behind her chair disappeared. She slowly reached out to the scroll and stood up from her chair to look out at the sea from the window.

"I thought it was a mistake coming all the way here. No, it was a mistake, but this mistake somehow ended up benefiting me in a way," Anastasha smiled softly as she leaned forward and stared out at the sea. "I wish we could see each other again, Count," she glanced at the scroll in her hand.

Anastasha looked at the patrolling Marine ships and noticed a battleship coming toward the cliff. She decided to go there to check what it was all about since there had been so many Marine ships that patrolled near her area for the past week.

Arka had just unboarded the ship, and he noticed Anastasha approaching with a few of her personal guards. He glanced at the man beside her, holding a quarterstaff ready to eliminate any threat. He knew that he was no match against that man and would lose in the first two moves.

"It has been a while, and I believe I should address you as Commander now," Anastasha smiled softly at Arka as she unfolded the fan and covered her lower half face with it. "What do I owe this pleasure, Commander?" She asked, her sharp gaze stared into Arka's eyes.

Arka lowered his head slightly at Anastasha out of respect toward the Asghar family.

"May we speak in privacy, Your Highness?" Arka asked with a serious expression. "It's something that nobody should listen to," he added.

"Hmm, intriguing," Anastasha chuckled softly, narrowing her eyes, still with the fan covering the lower half of her face. "Come, I wouldn't let you talk while standing in the first place, Commander," she said as she turned around.

Once Anastasha and Arka settled at the table with food and drinks on it, the maids and the guards left the dining hall. Arka looked at the food and drink, wondering how she got all that when the Bastios Kingdom struggled to get enough food because of the revolutionary parties.

"What? I'm an esteemed guest here, so it's given that they're giving me enough food for my stay here," Anastasha chuckled as she rested her cheek on her palm, staring right into Arka's eyes.

Arka got a chill down his spine, remembering how terrifying Anastasha was. She could read thoughts through behavior, and even a flick of an eyelash. He never thought to see someone as dangerous as Rasmus or the other way around.

"No, Your Highness. I didn't mean to pry on this matter, and I came here for another reason," Arka shook his head and reached out for a letter from his pocket. "I don't know what it is, and I came to send you this from Archduke Thalior, a representative from the South Neva Union," he slowly put the letter on the table where Anastasha could reach.

Anastasha glanced at the letter and slowly reached her hand to the letter. She broke the seal and pulled out the letter, reading it thoroughly as she drank her tea.

Arka sat there, waiting for Anastasha to throw in questions that he had been prepared to answer. However, he was dumbfounded when Anastasha put down the letter and didn't ask a thing, only enjoying her tea in silence.

"What do you think of Count Blackheart, Commander?" Anastasha asked, her eyes were empty, and she stared blankly at the wall.

Arka was prepared to answer different types of questions from Anastasha, but he didn't expect her to ask about Rasmus. To be asked such a question, he didn't know what to answer, and it seemed that whatever answer he gave, it wouldn't matter.

"Dangerous, Your Highness. That's something I believe," Arka answered as he closed his eyes, sitting on the edge of the chair.

"Ah, but you saw me in him and vice versa. Does that mean I'm dangerous in your eyes as well, Commander?" Anastasha unfolded the fan and covered the lower half of her face, staring coldly at Arka.

"For Your Highness to use my statement and turn it against me, make me feel guilty for what I had said, that already speaks volumes," Arka said as he avoided eye contact with Anastasha.

"Aren't you an honest one for a young man?" Anastasha smiled with her eyes while she still covered the lower half of her face with the fan. "No wonder Rasmus wanted you to be a part of his fellows," she chuckled softly.

Arka straightened his back, mildly disturbed that Anastasha knew about his encounter with Rasmus. He wondered how many eyes and ears Anastasha had in South Neva ever since she moved here and took refuge from the power struggle in East Neva.

"Do you know why the South Neva Union suddenly became interested in my existence here in South Neva, Commander? We both know that nobody should know about my whereabouts here, in this continent, and yet suddenly Archduke Thalior and the South Neva Union wanted to protect me from this chaos," Anastasha unfolded the fan and put it down as she grabbed her teacup.

Arka glanced at Anastasha and noticed that she knew a lot about Rasmus. He remembered that Rasmus had mentioned Anastasha a while back, and he assumed that those two had met each other in person.

"Because of Count Blackheart?" Arka furrowed his brows.

"I believe so too, but why?" Anastasha smiled gently as she tilted her head slightly and stared into Arka's eyes.

"I don't have the mind of a schemer, Your Highness. I don't know what kind of scheme Count Blackheart is doing or what his plan on doing all this," Arka answered, trying not to get too involved in the game that those two dangerous people were playing.

"How unfortunate, Commander. You don't have the mind of a schemer, but you're surrounded by schemers. Aren't you too ignorant, or do you not value your life and your safety?" Anastasha rested her cheek on her palm, still staring into Arka's eyes.

"With all due respect, Your Highness. I'm someone who's watching the two snakes lurking, competing against each other. I'm not the prey that the snakes are targeting, even if I'm ignorant, that doesn't affect me in the slightest," Arka answered as he stared into Anastasha's eyes. "Seeing that you're so eager to make me understand, you're wasting your time, Your Highness. I already know, and I'm aware," he continued with a serious expression.

Anastasha chuckled and slowly covered her mouth with the back of her hand as she began to laugh. Arka was disturbed by her reaction, he could never understand the mind behind the schemers.

"Oh, you just made my day, Commander," Anastasha smiled widely at Arka. "You said the snakes are competing against each other, and you're not their prey? It doesn't matter, Commander. The snakes need to stay sharp and in their prime to achieve their goal, and you are just one of the foods that will be devoured by the snakes to keep them sharp and in their prime," she explained, still with the wide smile on her face.

"Now that the South Neva Union is under Count Blackheart's influence, do you think you're just standing there watching? He's indirectly putting his influence on you and your whole fleet, Commander. You just haven't seen it," Anastasha pointed her finger at Arka with a smirk on her face.

"If you think that you're not, then let me make you understand, Commander. Count Blackheart is out there saving humanity, and every move they've made, are making, and are planning to make, they're orchestrated by him. Seeing you sitting here with me, giving a letter from the South Neva Union, do you still believe that you're not being influenced by him?" Anastasha rested her chin on her palm, raising her brows.

Arka didn't find her blabbering concerning in the slightest because he knew that it didn't matter and didn't affect him in the slightest. He was a fleet Commander, and he was being used in exchange for the safety of the people, it didn't make any difference. However, he didn't want to say those things because he knew it would be a waste of time.

Anastasha suddenly stood up from her chair and slowly approached Arka on the chair. She stood behind him and gently placed her hands on his shoulders as she leaned down to whisper into Arka's ear.

"One more thing, Commander. The snakes aren't competing for a goal, the snakes aren't bothered by each other's presence, they're enjoying their time, feasting. We are sharing something in common, that the likes of you wouldn't understand," Anastasha whispered with a smirk.

At that moment, Arka felt a chill down his spine from both her words and her warm breath on his neck.

"The smart ones share while the greedy ones kill each other, Commander. I want you to remember that," Anastasha chuckled as she pulled away. "Since you have delivered the letter, there's nothing else that we need to discuss, Commander. Enjoy your food, and leave once you're full," she said as she walked away with the letter in her hand.

Arka sighed, not even once did he have the appetite to eat when meeting someone dangerous like Anastasha. He decided to leave without touching anything on the table.

Chapter 235 - 235: Rival.

Arka was on his ship, watching Anastasha and all her knights board the ship. He didn't know that she would board the ship until a few minutes ago when he received a letter from her.

Arka wondered what Thalior wrote to Anastasha, and why she decided to join him and wanted to take refuge under the South Neva Union. However, he remembered what she said to him earlier about the two snakes sharing the territory rather than competing against each other.

Arka didn't want to think about it too much because he wouldn't be able to understand Rasmus and Anastasha's minds. They both had a similar air around them, having no moral compass, yet they weren't the type who were blinded by emotions.

Anastasha and her knights were escorted down into the cabin, but Anastasha decided to stay on the deck. Her personal knight, the man who held the quarterstaff, stayed by her side like her shadow.

"Commander, shall we have some tea? My maid can brew the best tea from East Neva, something that only a handful of people outside the Asghar family have tasted," Anastasha smiled at Arka, tapping the folded fan on her palm.

"Let's go to my cabin, Your Highness. It's nothing fancy, but it's still comfortable," Arka said as he pointed at his cabin on the top deck.

They made themselves comfortable in the cabin with Anastasha's personal guard outside, guarding the cabin. The tea that Anastasha promised came with the most expensive-looking cup and ceramic teapot. The maids carefully held them with gloves, afraid of contaminating the cups and the teapot.

"Did you know about a teapot that can kill someone you want while you can casually drink from it as well without having to worry about it, Commander?" Anastasha asked as she stopped the maid from pouring the tea into her cup.

"No, Your Highness. I have never heard such a thing," Arka shook his head.

"You see these two holes, Commander?" Anastasha showed the two small holes above the handle. "If I close the top hole, the air prevents the poison in the top chamber inside the teapot from coming out..." she demonstrated as she covered the bottom hole with her thumb and poured the tea into her cup.

"Now, if I close the bottom hole, the air prevents the tea from pouring out, only the poison comes out," Anastasha poured the tea into Arka's cup. "It's that simple," she smiled as she pushed Arka's teacup with the back of her fingers.

Arka looked at his teacup and Anastasha's teacup, both had the same color, and he couldn't see the difference. He didn't want to touch the cup in front of him after hearing what she said earlier.

"You know it's an insult and unforgivable if you don't accept an offer from a powerful family. You either lose your head or limbs, it's one of the unwritten laws in East Neva," Anastasha stared at Arka with a gentle smile.

Arka sighed and took a sip of the tea, surprised by the smoothness of the tea. It had a hint of sweetness and bitterness that mixed really well together. He had never tasted anything like it, however it tasted too fancy for him.

"Oh, you didn't even hesitate, Commander?" Anastasha was mildly surprised.

"You said the two snakes shared the territory. I'm assuming if I'm dead here, that might change the status since I know the other snake is fond of me. So, I believe that you don't want that to happen," Arka answered as he smelled the tea in his teacup.

"Hmm, looks like you finally understand a little about the mind of a schemer, Commander," Anastasha chuckled and took a sip of her tea. "How is the tea, Commander?"

"It tastes... expensive..." Arka answered, didn't know how to describe flavor since he devoted all his life as a soldier who only ate to recover his stamina, not for the taste.

Anastasha chuckled and immediately covered her mouth with the fan. She wasn't expecting such an answer, it was the first time she heard someone commented on the tea that way.

"Have you realized it by now, Commander? The question that I asked you back then?" Anastasha lowered the fan and folded it.

Arka furrowed his brows, wondering what the question Anastasha meant. He tried to recall what it was until he remembered the question about why the South Neva Union knew about her whereabouts and why they were interested in her.

"Is it about why the South Neva Union is interested in you, Your Highness?" Arka asked with a serious expression.

"Yes, what else could it be?" Anastasha smiled as she tilted her head slightly.

Arka clasped his hands together, placing them on his lips, trying to piece the puzzle together. He already knew that it was Rasmus who informed Thalior about Anastasha and her whereabouts. He then connected the puzzles and decided to answer Anastasha's question based on what he found.

"He's trying to protect you somehow, and I assume he doesn't want you to be captured by the revolutionary parties, especially the emissaries since they're demons," Arka answered as he glanced at Anastasha.

"See? What did I tell you? We both aren't competing, we are sharing something in common," Anastasha smiled warmly as she rested her cheek on her palm.

"Is that really what you think of him, Your Highness? Because all I can see is that he just doesn't want you to be another obstacle to him," Arka furrowed his brows, surprised that Anastasha believed that he was helping her.

"Does that change the fact that he's helping me, Commander?" Anastasha asked as she stood up and brushed the edge of the table with a calm expression. "Do I lose something from this? Does he lose something from this? You know that Count Blackheart and I don't lose anything from this. Does he benefit from this? Yes, and so do I," she smiled as she leaned against the table and stared at Arka.

"You're not afraid that he might use this to gain a favor from you? For saving your life? We both know that you can leave and be safe even without me, Count Blackheart, or even the South Neva Union's help. Why did you choose to comply with him?" Arka narrowed his eyes, confused by Anastasha's decision to play along in Rasmus's game.

Anastasha turned around and poured herself a cup of tea gracefully. She kept putting a smile on her face while she enjoyed her tea in her seat.

"Perhaps I want to see him again," Anastasha answered, staring at the spot on the wall. "You can interpret this as an invitation from him, and I decided to accept it," she added.

"Even if it means owing something to him?" Arka asked with his arms crossed.

"As I said, the smart ones share while the greedy ones kill each other. A man of his caliber, he's not greedy, and I'm on the other hand, am capable of giving whatever he wants. Knowing each other is worth more than anything, Commander. To make a connection with him is priceless," Anastasha put down her teacup and wiped her lips with a handkerchief.

"Why is it that you're admiring him, Your Highness?" Arka leaned back, tilting his head with a curious look on his face.

"I admire those who can reach this high, the mind that is," Anastasha smiled as she rested her chin on the back of her hand.

"What do you see in him, Your Highness?" Arka asked, trying to dig up information from Anastasha and the mind inside her head. "Do you think he's an ally to you? Enemy? Or something else?"

Anastasha smirked as she stared right into Arka's eyes, knowing his intentions. At that moment, Arka knew that he might have pushed too far, but there was no going back. However, Anastasha didn't mind his question and casually took a sip of her tea.

"You can say that he's a formidable opponent, a rival," Anastasha answered as she stared at her reflection on the teacup. "I can admire him because he's not an enemy. Do you understand what I mean, Commander?" She tilted her head and looked at Arka.

Arka didn't answer the question and thought about it instead. He didn't know what to think, and he couldn't imagine what would happen if both Rasmus and Anastasha decided to work together. He didn't know what was worse, seeing them together or seeing them against each other later on. What he knew for sure was that they both didn't hesitate to eliminate anything that tried to stop them.

"I never thought that I would have an enjoyable conversation. It has been a while, and I thank you for that, Commander," Anastasha said as she stood up. "I will take my leave, Commander. I will rest in my cabin if you need anything," she continued as she walked toward the door.

"Yes, Your Highness, have a good rest," Arka stood up and bowed his head as he watched Anastasha leave his cabin.

Chapter 236 - 236: Unnerving silence.

Thalior and all his army met with the Servil army at the rendezvous point and made a camp there. They were going to wipe clean the towns and villages before they invaded the capital city. They had to be cautious because they believed they might encounter demons.

"Your Grace, I received the letter," Xena said as soon as Thalior entered the tent. "It's good to have Count Blackheart on our side," she continued and pointed her hand at the chair.

"You won't believe the report that came to me last night," Thalior said as he sat down at the table. "It appears that Count Blackheart and his team encountered someone powerful. The Lorde Hills on the north side, it has turned into a massive valley," he stared at Xena with a serious expression.

Xena's eyes widened, shocked and curious by the information. She looked down at the map and watched Thalior cross the Lorde Hills from the map. It was a vast area with miles of radius, but everything was destroyed and turned into a big valley.

"There's also an abyss there. The scout team said that they couldn't see the bottom of it. They believed it was where the battle ended, and there was something at the bottom, a body of a powerful demon perhaps," Thalior explained and put a small circle on the map, the location of the abyss.

Xena was curious about the abyss, and it wasn't just her, Thalior was also curious about it.

"And where are they now, Your Grace?" Xena asked, lifting her head to look at Thalior.

"They're hiding, apparently... I would do the same if I were them," Thalior looked at his knight, coming into the tent to bring tea for both of them. "As I mentioned in the letter, we need to be extremely cautious. Count Blackheart believed that someone or something stronger would come," he continued, and took a sip of his tea.

Xena sighed, tapping on the desk as she stared at the map of the Ederlyn Kingdom on the table. She had failed to protect Astrea, and it was still bothering her as a leader. She was granted the 3rd Swordmaster, and she had to live up to her responsibility.

"We have so many soldiers sitting in this place. If what Count Blackheart said came true, that a powerful demon would appear, we wouldn't be able to stop it. We would be their feast..." Xena said with a worried expression, staring at the teacup in her hand.

Thalior's demeanor turned drastically as he glanced at the entrance of the tent, making sure nobody was watching. He then glanced at Xena as he pulled out a small piece of paper from underneath his left glove. He didn't say a word when he pushed the paper toward Xena.

Xena looked down at the paper and Thalior back and forth for a moment before she reached out to pick the paper. She glanced around and didn't feel any presence around the tent, she then read the paper silently. She knew that Thalior didn't want anyone to hear their conversation, believing there might be spies among his men.

Xena's eyes twitched and her heart raced when she read the content of the piece of paper. Her lips and throat became dry, making her lick her lips and swallow hard. She slowly pushed the piece of paper back to Thalior, but her hand trembled uncontrollably. She took a deep breath before she took a sip of her cold tea as she stared at Thalior's cold and serious expression.

Xena exhaled deeply as she tapped the table rapidly, her eyes moving around, thinking about the message. She slowly nodded her head, signaling Thalior that she understood and would play along.

(At the same time, in the palace, Ederlyn capital city)

All the revolutionary leaders trembled on their knees, their heads touching the ground with cold sweat all over their bodies. They glanced at each other with their trembling eyes, terrified for their lives. When they saw a black mist on the ground around them, they all whimpered and closed their eyes.

They could hear soft footsteps, the sound of bare feet walking on the soft carpet, walking past them and climbing the small steps toward the throne. They heard the sound of cloth brushing against each other before it became silent. They knew the being was sitting on the throne, staring down at them.

"It has been two days..." A soft and yet distorted voice muttered. "And yet all of you couldn't find anything?" The demon asked.

"My Lord... We... We tried everything..." One of the leaders answered with a shaky and cracking voice.

"Give me one reason that I should keep you alive as humans?" The demon asked, the voice was soft, soothing, and yet disturbing to hear.

"My Lord... we don't even know what we are looking for..." The second leader answered, his face still touching the floor. "How can we find something that we don't even know? You want us to find someone strong, but how do we know if they're strong or not? We can't use all of our forces to find that person

when we are about to go to war against the South Neva Union and the Servil faction?" He asked back, knowing that it was such a ridiculous order by that person.

"Humans are useless..." The demon sounded disappointed.

The revolutionary leaders cowered in fear as their hands unconsciously covered their heads while they were bowing. They all begged for forgiveness and begged to be spared under the demon's generosity. Their lives were worth nothing in the eyes of the demon, and they knew that, however, they tried their luck to be spared.

"You want to be spared? You have to earn that life of yours by proving yourself useful," the demon said in a calm voice. "You have failed to prove your life is worth anything," the demon continued.

The leaders couldn't defend themselves anymore, and all they could hope for was mercy given by the demon in front of them.

"However, the emissary wants you to live, to be useful for this moment," the demon said and stood up from the throne. "The enemy is right where we want them to be. All of you will kill them all, without leaving a single soul alive."

The leaders closed their eyes, realizing that they were sent to the battlefield to die with zero chance of living. They knew that the South Neva Union and the Servil faction were the strongest forces in South Neva.

"Don't you worry, humans. The emissary is kind enough to bring his army to aid you," the demon assured as the demon walked down the steps. "And I'll be the one who leads the army."

One of the leaders lifted his head to look at the demon in front of him, he saw the pale feet of the demon with long, sharp nails and its long legs that were covered in tar. He slowly looked at the dark gray, worn-out robe that the demon wore, and then the long arms that almost touched the floor with their sharp claws. His eyes began to tremble, however, he couldn't stop staring as he looked up at the abyss underneath the hood, only red glowing eyes that he could see.

The man began to scream his lungs out, but then his body turned pale instantly, his eyes turned white, and then collapsed. The other leaders looked at the man, they thought that he had fainted, but they realized that the man had just died with his eyes and mouth wide open. Fear was written all over the man's face, and they had never seen anyone die from fear.

"A human dared to stare... humans shouldn't stare at what they shouldn't see..." The demon said as they walked past the two leaders who kept their heads on the floor. "Now he can stare at me as long as he wishes. Only the dead can withstand the torment..." the demon began to chuckle.

The remaining two leaders' eyes were filled with tears, their faces were covered in cold sweat.

"We will be moving as soon as the sun is setting..." The demon said and turned around to glare at the leaders bowing on the floor. "Don't make me wait, human..." The demon warned, and then left the room.

The two leaders had been holding their breath for so long that they had forgotten how to breathe. The moment the demon left the throne room, they raised their heads, but then their vision became blurry and collapsed. They fainted because of fear and high blood pressure.

(At the same time in the abandoned building)

Rasmus, Aris, and Javi were sitting at a table in a dark room, prepping their weapons. Suddenly, they heard someone walk into the building and glance at the person who had entered. It was Videl, with that huge grin on his face as he approached them and took a seat at the table.

"They sent a Prime Lord as we had expected, but he's not alone, he has a whole army of the dead with him. A thousand of them, the finest Corrupted," Videl informed with a smile on his face.

Rasmus, Aris, and Javi stared at each other for a moment before they all nodded.

Chapter 237 - 237: Humanity.

"Have you heard?" A knight approached a group of South Neva Union knights who were resting at the campfire. "The messenger hasn't returned from the capital city. I think they were killed," he said as he sat down among the knights.

"Yeah, we heard. We were talking about it as well," the other knight answered as he nodded his head, staring blankly at the bread in his hand. "I don't know about this. I have a weird feeling that keeps gnawing me," he muttered.

The other knights stared at the campfire, watching the flame devour the woods and listening to the crackling sound in silence. They felt the same thing that something didn't feel right, even though they had gone through something like this countless times in the past. They were all seasoned knights, yet they felt uneasy about the situation.

"I went to talk with the Servil's knights this evening, and they were oddly quiet too," a knight stared at the distance at the Servil's knights' tents. "I guess we are on the edge because they're not here with us..."

"Who? Count Blackheart and Lady Aris?" The other knight asked as he warmed his hands on the campfire.

"I mean, we are dealing with demons, and they have been the ones who dealt with those things for us, you know? It's just..." The knight muttered, but then he heard a faint horn being sounded in the distance. "Did you guys hear that?" He furrowed his brows and stared at the other knights.

Once they heard the horn more clearly, they jolted from their seats, hurriedly put on their helmets, and grabbed their weapons. They were too focused on grabbing their weapons when they saw a massive ball of fire fall right on top of them.

"God... have mercy on my so—" before the knight could finish his sentence, he got hit by the fireball and exploded into pieces.

The fireball exploded and flattened a big chunk of the camp, and there were a few more fireballs going down toward the camp from the sky. The knights couldn't protect themselves from such devastating and destructive spells. The shockwave and the heatwave crushed and burned their bodies inside their armors.

A single massive fireball was enough to kill dozens of knights. They didn't know where to go, and it was pointless to escape their deaths because nobody could stop those massive fireballs. However, they were wrong because Novia was there, creating a massive barrier that she had prepared before they set the camp. She had created dozens of magic formations around the camp and activated them from such threats.

"Run! I don't know how long the Mana barrier will last!" Novia shouted as she looked around, where the knights were mesmerized and stunned by the Mana barrier and the explosion that the fireballs created.

"We can't run. We have nowhere to run," Xena walked past Novia as she unsheathed her sword and stared at the sky where more fireballs appeared. "Can you give me a lift? I'll destroy all of them," she looked at Novia over her shoulder.

Novia nodded and created a magic formation on Xena's back. She then pulled out the artifact gloves from the storage ring and wore them hurriedly. She linked the magic formation to the gloves with Mana and then gave Xena a nod.

"Don't think! Just send me toward the fireballs!" Xena said as she held her sword with both hands.

Novia raised her hands and made Xena float in the air, sending Xena flying beyond the Mana barrier and toward the fireball.

Xena imbued Aura with her sword as she flew toward the fireball. Once she was close enough, she imbued her body and armor with Aura as well to protect herself from the intense heat. Once she was in range, she swung her sword, releasing a massive slash wave. It was enough to cut the fireball in half, and it exploded.

Novia flicked her hands to the right, making sure that Xena didn't get blasted. She began to run as fast as she could, and then flew above the ground, following where Xena was going. She was like playing a kite where the kite was Xena, and when she found out that Xena was fine, she guided Xena toward the next fireball.

Thalior watched everything from a distance, but then he heard horns from every side. He squinted his eyes and saw thousands of revolutionary knights marching toward them. He was surprised that they were surrounded, and couldn't believe that he was unaware of their movements.

"Your Grace! Your order!" Knight captains approached him, fully prepared to fight the enemy.

"Dome formation. We still have the Mana barrier, use it while it lasts. We need to stand our ground!" Thalior ordered.

All the knights' captains nodded with understanding and went their separate ways, ordering the knights to defend the camp.

Not long after Thalior ordered his knights, the Mana barrier suddenly shattered, shocking everyone, including Novia and Xena. Seeing the Mana barrier disappear, the enemy mages began to cast their spells and bombard the camp from a distance. However, both the South Neva Union and the Servil's army had dozens of high-ranking mages, Wizards, and High Wizards to create magic barriers.

Grayson appeared behind Thalior, covered in blood and wounds. Thalior was shocked to see his trusted eyes and ears in that state.

"My Lord... the enemy... the Corrupted are here... thousands of them..." Grayson could barely form a sentence, his eyes were close to turning white, trying to stay conscious. "A demon... a powerful demon..." he muttered before he collapsed.

"Grayson!" Thalior held Grayson and checked Grayson's heartbeat on the neck. He was relieved that Grayson had just fainted.

"Your Grace, allow me to attend Sir Grayson," Archbishop Theresa said as she went down to her knees and looked at Grayson.

"Please, Your Excellency..." Thalior nodded and carefully put Grayson down. "I'll lead the army," he said as he unsheathed his sword and looked at which side needed his help the most.

Thalior, with all his trusted knights, went to the north side where the enemy's main force was. His presence alone was enough to raise their morale, the leader who came to the front line to fight was enough to make the knights remember that they swore to protect humanity.

"Knights! Raise your weapons! If God wants us dead tonight, then we will fight until our last breaths!" Thalior shouted as he glared at the thousands of revolutionary knights in front of him. "I'm proud that I can die side by side with all of you," he continued as he readied his stance.

All the knights shouted their lungs out as they raised their weapons and shields.

"Even if you can only survive for a second, a minute, or an hour, that will make a huge difference! Fight with everything you've got!" Thalior said as he tightened the grip on his sword.

All the knights readied their shields, creating a wall of shields with Thalior in front of them.

"Eat your own medicine you bastard!" Novia screamed her lungs out as she swung her hands down toward the enemy line.

Thalior and all the knights looked up and saw Novia redirect the massive fireball toward the enemy line. They were shocked when she single-handedly threw the fireball toward the enemy. They watched as the fireball fell and exploded on the enemy, killing hundreds of them while the remaining hundreds were injured by the heatwave and the shockwave.

The revolutionary knights lost their momentum, and then Xena landed right in front of Thalior. She was injured, her face was covered by her own blood after she destroyed countless massive fireballs in the sky. She didn't show the pain that she endured, only a sharp gaze toward Thalior with determination.

"For humanity, Your Grace," Xena said as she turned around to look at the enemy line as she readied her stance.

"For humanity!" Hundreds of the Servil knights repeated her words as they joined the line.

Thalior looked to his right at the Servil's knights with a faint smirk on his face.

"For humanity!" Thalior raised his sword.

"For humanity!" The South Neva Union's knights repeated.

"Charge!" Thalior pointed his sword at the broken enemy line.

"Charge!" Xena pointed her sword at the broken enemy line.

Novia watched hundreds of knights charge toward the enemy without a single fear in their step. The enemy, on the other hand, they were cowering in fear as they had lost a big chunk of their force. She then turned around and decided to help the other side from the enemy.

(On the enemy's back line)

The Prime Lord looked at the sky as a small imp landed on his index finger.

"They thought it was a powerful enemy that attacked them? How disappointing..." The Prime Lord listened to the imp, the one who created such destructive and massive fireballs in the sky. "Looks like the one that I'm looking for isn't here..." He muttered.

The Prime Lord swirled his left hand, and immediately dozens of imps came to him.

"Kill all of them..." The Prime Lord ordered.

All the imps flew away and went up high into the night sky.

Chapter 238 - 238: A second chance.

Xena and Thalior could barely stand their ground, their bodies trembling, making clanking and rattling sounds of their armor. They could barely catch a breath before an explosion shockwave knocked them down.

Novia was on her knees, panting and covered in sweat. Her whole body was completely numb and spent from using powerful spells. She slowly looked up and watched the knights getting bombarded by massive fireballs, killing them.

The knights fought until their last breath without a single regret. They were no match against the Corrupted and the revolutionary knights at the same time. The cold winter night began to bite their bones the moment they collapsed, and they slowly losing their consciousness.

The camp, which was covered in snow, had become a sea of blood. The ground was no longer covered in snow, it was covered in dead bodies. The night was filled with screams and growls, but it became completely silent.

Archbishop Theresa carefully walked toward Novia, trying so hard not to step on the corpses. She looked around, and there were only a hundred or fewer knights left while the enemy still had hundreds and close to a thousand, not to mention the Corrupted.

"Your Excellency... you need to run while you still can..." Novia said under her breath as she looked up at Theresa.

"No, it would be the greatest sin to abandon humanity, Lady Novia. I'll stay here, and I'll do my best to help," Theresa smiled as she shook her head and placed her left hand on Novia's shoulder. "I'll do something..." she muttered as she frowned and looked at the sea of corpses around her.

Novia was furious with herself for being weak and unable to live up to her master's expectations. She didn't know what Lenin would think of her when she found out that her disciple had failed to protect the people.

"Oh, the almighty God, please give us strength..." Archbishop Theresa clasped her hands on her knees amidst the chaos. "I'm willing to sacrifice my life for these good people. Please, protect us, God. This will be my first and last request to you, oh almighty God..." She shed tears as she pressed her hands to her forehead.

Novia turned her head to look at Theresa, clenching her fists and gritting her teeth, ashamed of her inability to protect such a person as Theresa. She slowly lowered her head, unable to watch how Theresa begged God to protect her and everyone. Suddenly, she felt a gentle breeze that wobbled her body, and when she lifted her head, she saw a white translucent barrier go through her.

Archbishop Pavius witnessed Theresa's power for the first time. A barrier of divine energy was released and expanded rapidly. The Corrupted were pushed away by the barrier, and they got badly injured by it.

Nobody knew outside the Holy Nation about Archbishop Theresa because she was born and raised in the temple. She was different from the other priests and always spent her time alone. She had no friends, but she had one close friend, and it was the Saint herself, Astrea Angelis.

Archbishop Pavius heard it from the Saint herself about Theresa's power. She said that Theresa could save thousands of lives, something that only a Saint could do. He finally understood why Astrea treasured Theresa so much and kept her by her side.

The dying knights inside the divine barrier felt the warmth seep through their bodies. The exhaustion and the wounds disappeared within their bodies. Surprised by what was happening, they all stood up to look at the barrier.

Novia's stamina and Mana were replenished in almost an instant. She was shocked by Theresa's power and knew that she might be able to change the tide with it. A second chance to prove to herself that she was better than before.

"Your Excellency! Thank you..." Novia turned around to look at Therese who was still kneeling and her hands clasped on her forehead.

Theresa didn't move a muscle or respond to Novia's words, which worried Novia.

"Your Excellency?" Novia muttered as she slowly reached her hand to Theresa's hands. However, she noticed the Mana around Theresa was thinning rapidly.

Novia touched Theresa's hand, and she was utterly shocked when she felt the coldness in Theresa's hand. She slowly reached Theresa's wrist to check her pulse, but there was nothing. Her eyes began to water, shocked by the fact that Theresa died for her and the others.

"No... No!" Novia was shaken by what she had just discovered. Her eyes trembled as tears fell to her chin.

All the knights, including Thalior and Xena who had just recovered and healed by the divine barrier realized what had happened. The guilt and the shame were gnawing at them from within, but they knew they couldn't change the past.

"Brothers... Sisters..." A knight leaned down to grab his sword.

The knights around him slowly turned their heads toward him, both the knights from the South Neva Union and the Servil faction. They stared silently at him and waited for him to continue speaking.

"The moment life escapes, death will come to us again..." The knight said as he held his sword and stared at his reflection on the blade. His weary armor and blood on it reflected the pain and the fate he went through. "This second chance, we don't deserve it, and yet we can't waste it..." he muttered as he wiped the blood off the blade.

"This second chance will determine how long we will live before we embrace the cold of death once again..." The knight stared at the enemy in front of him. "Her Excellency... her body, we must protect it at all costs. Our lives belong to her now, and with that being said..." he readied his stance, gripping the sword tightly. "We will meet her and thank her for giving us such a gift..." he said as he gritted his teeth, determined to fight to the death once more.

All the knights looked at their bloody hands, and their broken armor was evidence of their inevitable death. They were brought to life, but they knew they had failed, and they resonated with the knight's words. Their lives were no longer theirs, and they couldn't escape death, only prolonged it a little bit more.

"Death..." A knight leaned down and grabbed his weapon from the ground. "We will thank Her Excellency soon, brothers, sisters..." he smiled widely as he readied his stance.

All the knights nodded and leaned down to grab their weapons, beginning to ready their stances as they stared at the enemy. They never thought to face death once again, didn't fear them, it was close to a relief, something that words couldn't describe.

Now that the dying knights had risen from their dying state, the numbers of the revolutionary knights and the two factions had become even. Although the numbers were even, the experience, the morale, and the skill of each individual outmatched the revolutionary knights.

The moment the divine barrier disappeared, the enemy charged toward them with the Corrupted. The South Neva Union and the Servil faction knights were fearless; they all laughed and smiled to welcome their enemies.

Novia flew up high into the sky and created multiple magic formations around her. She didn't have time to grieve, but she didn't try to ignore it. She mixed all the raw emotions within her to give her the strength to fight. Those raw emotions and the Mana around her turned into sparks of lightning. She then spread her arms and fingers, releasing bolts of lightning toward the enemy lines.

Each bolt of lightning was enough to kill them before they could feel the pain. She zapped dozens of knights and mages each second. She used everything she got at that moment, didn't care if she would collapse afterward, because she knew that it was the moment to determine whether they would win or lose.

The Corrupted were either exploded, disintegrated, or ripped apart by the lightning bolts. The enemy's knights were terrified by Novia's power as if they were fighting a thunder God. Not to mention, they were also facing knights who didn't fear pain or death anymore.

Thalior and Xena joined the fight from the side, ambushing the enemy line. It was a massacre, and they didn't care about anything but eliminating those who didn't belong to the South Neva Union or the Servil faction. There was no order, only soldiers who fought to cherish the second life while it lasted, which was given to them.

Novia changed her focus to the imps in the sky and began to zap them with lightning bolts. The imps couldn't cast any more fireballs as they were trying to dodge and run away from the lightning.

"Don't run you little piece of shit!" Novia shouted as she pointed her hands up into the sky.

Novia changed the calm night into a cloudy and even darker night, brewing a storm with her Mana and the lightning bolts. She then created a massive magic formation above her and turned the weather into her ally. The moment thunder rumbled, she swung her hands down, releasing the real lightning bolts down, striking the enemy lines in the distance infinitely as long as she kept feeding the magic formation with Mana.

The imps could no longer dodge the unpredictable and finally got hit until they turned into ashes.

"Just a little bit more..." Novia grunted as she watched dozens of lightning bolts strike the ground per second. " Just a little bit..." She gritted her teeth as she watched the enemy run away, retreating.

Novia could still hold it for a few more seconds, but suddenly her magic formation and the storm disappeared in a matter of seconds. She was shocked, and that was when she saw a being floating in the distance, wearing a worn-out dark gray robe with its long arms and legs.

"So you finally show your face..." Novia chuckled in disbelief. "You demon... bastard..." she muttered before she lost consciousness and free-fell.

Xena, who saw Novia, immediately ran toward her and caught her before she fell to the ground. She carefully put down Novia, and then looked up at the being in the sky as Thalior and the remaining knights gathered behind her.

"We will stand our ground here..." Thalior looked over her shoulder at Theresa's dead body, still kneeling, and her hands clasped on her forehead. "We will fight... we have no choice but to fight..." he muttered.

All the knights nodded and readied their stances with their weapons ready, staring at the being in the sky and another thousand of the Corrupted below him on the ground. The Prime Lord brought the dead back to life, turning them into Corrupted, adding more force under their command.

Chapter 239 - 239: Acceptance.

Archbishop Pavius tried his best to assist Thalior, Xena, and the knights while at the same time keeping Novia safe. He could bless them with divine power, giving them the strength and power to fight against the Corrupted.

Xena and Thalior, both Swordmasters, used everything they had to get rid of the Corrupted. They stood their ground and fought the endless enemy that kept coming.

The battle was almost one-sided. It wasn't that they couldn't kill the Corrupted, it was because they kept coming back to life. Not only that, most of the knights had fallen and became their enemy as well because they were turned into Corrupted.

Xena and Thalior used everything they got and cut dozens of Corrupted into pieces in a single combo attack. They were the only ones who could prevent the Corrupted from resurrecting, and it didn't change the situation in the slightest.

Minutes passed, and the sound of weapons clashing became less and less. The number of knights had gone down significantly, and they were killing their brothers and sisters in arms. There was no fear in their eyes, only acceptance and commitment to fight until the very last breath.

"Your Grace..." Xena leaned her back against Thalior's back. She could no longer lift her sword, her eyes were barely open. "Something is off. None of them are attacking us..." She muttered as she looked at her surroundings, where the Corrupted stood still, glaring at them.

Thalior slowly lowered his sword and leaned his back against Xena. He noticed it as well, and then he looked at Archbishop Pavius, who was guarding Theresa's dead body, and Novia, who was unconscious.

"It's just like that time..." Thalior gritted his teeth in frustration. "When we went beyond the Blackcliffs to hunt down the Third Saint, the False Prophet, they spared our lives as well..." he explained to Xena, who didn't know about that story.

"What's going to happen to us, Your Grace? If they were going to turn us into mindless corpses, I would rather kill myself before they could do it..." Xena asked as she looked at a dozen of the Servil knights that were still alive.

"Life and death... they can control both, Lady Xena. It doesn't change anything if you die by their hands or your own hands..." Thalior glanced at the handful of South Neva Union knights that were still alive. "Let's group up and protect Lady Novia and His Excellency," he pushed himself up and walked toward Archbishop Pavius.

Xena could see it the way Thalior walked from behind, it was the walk of a man who had accepted his fate. She looked around her for one last time, and the Corrupted didn't even move a muscle. She then followed Thalior, dragging her sword because she had used all her strength.

All the knights looked at Thalior and Xena, and they all nodded their heads without saying a word. It was both because there was no need for words and because they didn't have enough strength to speak. They were grateful for being able to fight until the end under two great Swordmasters and leaders whom they looked up to.

"Let me heal you, Your Grace, Lady Xena," Pavius looked at both of them with a worried expression.

"Save your strength, Your Excellency," Thalior smiled weakly as he stared at Archbishop Pavius' trembling hands because he was also on the brink of collapsing. "We are fine," he assured as he gently grabbed Pavius' upper arm.

Archbishop Pavius lowered his head with understanding, and then went down to treat Novia, who was exhausted and in a Mana depletion state. Suddenly, the cold winter felt colder and fear-inducing when the cold wind blew their napes.

Everyone lifted their heads and saw the Prime Lord descend slowly as he stared down at them with his glowing red eyes. The hood that covered his head prevented anyone from seeing beyond the abyss, only the glowing eyes that they could see which terrified them.

The Prime Lord landed on the snow with his pale bare feet, staring down at Theresa's dead body in the pose of a devoted child of God, praying on her knee and hands clasped on her forehead. However, his gaze made Thalior and Xena raise their swords and block his vision from seeing Theresa. The knights stood behind them and pointed their weapons at the Prime Lord, fearlessly.

The Prime Lord raised his left hand and flicked it to the left. Everyone in front of him was pushed to the left by an unknown force. They all hit the Corrupted, and yet the Corrupted didn't attack them, only stared down at them.

Archbishop Pavius was the only one who didn't get pushed by the unknown force, standing tall in front of Theresa's dead body. He still had a bit of power within him, and he channeled his divine power into his hands. He released a divine ray toward the Prime Lord. It was enough to make the Corrupted hiss and make their skin burn because of the divine light. However, to everyone's surprise, the Prime Lord stood there, in front of Pavius, and was staring down at him, unaffected by the divine light.

"What are you..." Pavius asked, cowering in fear as he lost his strength.

The Prime Lord reached Pavius's neck and choked him with his left hand, lifting him up and suffocating him slowly. Thalior and the others were powerless, unable to move a muscle because of the unknown force.

Suddenly, Pavius's body got caught in flame, a black flame that melted his skin. He tried to scream, but nothing came out as his throat was being crushed by the Prime Lord. He tried to resist, but he was being burned alive and suffocated to death. Before he lost consciousness and accepted his death, the Prime Lord grabbed his face and crushed it like a watermelon being crushed.

"God will not embrace your soul as your soul is mine now..." The Prime Lord muttered softly as he dropped the body and let it melt.

Everyone watched Pavius's unrecognizable body turn into a lump of flesh and keep burning until it turned into ashes. The words that Prime Lord said haunted them because they realized that death wouldn't be the end of them, it would be the eternal torment that even God might not be able to save them.

"Don't... touch her..." Thalior uttered his emotion as he glared at the Prime Lord.

The Prime Lord ignored Thalior's words and reached out to Theresa's hands, lowering them gently and lifting her chin so he could see her face. He noticed the peacefulness in her expression, mixed with sadness.

"Unlike him, her soul is already up there... in a place where God has embraced her sacrifice and rewarded her with a place that only a few souls could enter. This is nothing but an empty shell..." The Prime Lord said as he kept staring at Theresa's face.

"What are you going to do to her body?" Thalior asked weakly.

"My master has been looking for a suitable replacement... they will be happy to have her body..." The Prime Lord answered calmly. "However, for you and the rest... salvation is out of reach as your God has abandoned you..." he slowly turned his head to stare at Thalior and the remaining survivors.

At that moment, Thalior recalled the helplessness when he was beyond the Blackcliffs. He was terrified, a lump stuck in his throat, unable to utter his fear. However, he never had a thought of asking forgiveness or mercy from a demon like the Prime Lord. He glanced at his surroundings, thousands of Corrupted were standing there, and he thought that he would be one of them soon.

The Prime Lord slowly approached them as a few Corrupted carried Theresa's dead body. At that moment, they realized that their time had finally come, to die and to suffer for eternity. When he lifted his left hand, everyone closed their eyes, except for Xena who kept her eyes open and ready to see what kind of pain that the Prime Lord was about to do to them.

The peaceful sky suddenly turned dark, the sky began to rumble as if the sky was furious. The Prime Lord slowly lifted his head, stared at the cloudy dark sky and flashes of lightning in the distance. He didn't know what was going on until there was one specific flash of lightning that moved from the distance and toward the sky above him. The lightning then struck him directly from above, deafening everyone's ears.

The Prime Lord was unaffected by the lightning, however, he felt the tingling feeling all over his body. He then saw a person float in the sky, wearing a robe that covered his face. He noticed the Mana around that person, way more than what he saw from Novia.

Without thinking for a second, the Prime Lord created a barrier made of demonic energy, forming into a massive dome that protected him and all the Corrupted. He knew that no spells made of Mana could break the barrier, but to his surprise, the barrier shattered into pieces. He turned around where he saw the source of the attack from, but before he could react, a person landed in front of him and released a powerful Aura that was enough to push him away and cut dozens of Corrupted in half.

The moment the barrier disappeared, the person in the sky released a massive bolt of lightning that moved around like a tornado rather than disappearing once it struck the ground. The bolt of lightning disintegrated hundreds of Corrupted in a matter of seconds, and then the bolt of lightning shattered and spread out, immobilizing hundreds more.

Thalior and the others were shocked by those two mysterious people. When the person landed next to the mysterious person who had just sent the Prime Lord flying, they both pulled down the hoods, revealing themselves.

"Great Sage Lenin?! And Commander Uriel?!" A knight was deeply shocked.

"Rest, and let us handle these abomination," Uriel said as she released Aura and controlled dozens of swords with it.

"Protect my disciple for me," Lenin said as she looked down at Novia who was still unconscious, and then created a powerful Mana barrier that pushed all the Corrupted away.

Chapter 240 - 240: Trinity.

Uriel controlled dozens of the fallen knights swords with Aura. The moment she left the barrier, the swords began to mince the Corrupted into tiny pieces. Lenin on the other hand, used a powerful fire wall that waved toward the Corrupted, melting them into lumps of meat.

Thalior and the others watched the difference between masters and them. Thalior kept his eyes on Uriel and watched her massacre the Corrupted without hesitation. She minced everything that moved in front of her.

While they were watching the two masters eliminate the enemy, they felt a refreshing gush of wind from behind them. They turned around and saw a person riding a horse, entering the Mana barrier.

The person landed and pulled down the hood, revealing who it was. They were surprised, but then felt guilty, lowering their heads in shame. It was Astrea, and she looked at Theresa's dead body on the ground.

Astrea went down to one knee and gently caressed Theresa's hair. She didn't show any expression, only the gentleness of her caress that showed how saddened she was to see a friend passed away.

"Your Holiness... We..." Thalior paused, unable to finish his sentence because of guilt. He didn't even dare to look at Astrea's eyes.

Astrea stood up and approached the survivors. She clasped her hands together, releasing divine power that was enough to heal everyone just like how Theresa did it. They were grateful, but they all bowed down to their knees, apologizing for failing to protect both Archbishops.

"You have lost more than me, it should be me kneeling in front of all of you for coming here late. I could save thousands of them, but I was too late," Astrea went down to her knees and stared at them with a gentle gaze. "You have endured enough pain, and you have lost your friends, your sworn brothers and sisters..." she added, frowning as she looked at each one of them.

Nobody knew what to say because Astrea was right. They had endured so much that their reasoning slowly came back to their senses. They began to feel fear, regret, grief, and lastly relieved. Some began to cry, calling the names of their fallen brothers and sisters for failing to protect them.

While they were overwhelmed by their emotions, they heard loud explosions and sound barriers being torn apart. They snapped back to reality and watched Lenin fight against powerful demons in the air, not Corrupted.

Lenin created nine magic circle formation and released shapeless and colorless magic. It was wind magic that broke the sound barrier, destroying and cutting everything it touched. The demons managed to dodge it since they could trade Mana. However, Lenin didn't let the chance go by casting another magic formation that released multiple lightning bolts simultaneously.

The demons dodged the wind magic only to be struck by lightning bolts. Only a few could dodge them, but it was already too late because Lenin had released extreme heat around them. The lightning bolts moved faster, rapidly, and more potent, zapping those demons a few times in less than a second.

Before the demons could recover, Lenin gathered the wind into a spherical ball. She fed the ball with more Mana while she forced it to shrink even smaller. The moment the ball could no longer contain the pressure, it exploded and destroyed the demons' bodies until there was nothing left.

Lenin floated in the air, expressionless and no words needed to be said for what she had achieved. She looked down at the thousands of Corrupted that marched toward Uriel. She spread her arms and gathered as much Mana as she could, and then she began to create a Mana ball in between her hands.

Thanks to Astrea's power, Novia regained consciousness from her Mana depletion state. She stared at her master, and she was confused by what Lenin was trying to do to gather that much Mana. She had never seen Lenin do something like that.

Once Lenin had gathered enough Mana into the ball, she used all her concentration to maintain its state. She closed her eyes and released the ball, throwing it down toward the army of the Corrupted.

Uriel who was busy massacring the Corrupted felt the immense amount of Mana from above. She saw the light blue ball coming down, and she didn't think twice to run away while she minced the Corrupted that blocked her path.

The moment the blue ball of Mana hit the ground, it exploded without a sound. The blinding light, the explosion, the extreme heat and shock waves were enough to obliterate thousands of Corrupted. The silence was deafening, and the destruction made everyone speechless.

Astrea created a divine barrier under the Mana barrier that Lenin had made. Protecting the survivors from the blast that shattered the Mana barrier instantly. The divine barrier could barely withstand it, and it took a toll on Astrea's body since she had to maintain the barrier on her own.

The explosion and the smoke in the shape of a mushroom went all the way up to the sky. Everything was flattened, turned into dust and not a single life or even the dead could survive that. Thalior and the others were petrified by the destruction power that made their hearts race faster than when they were facing death. They witnessed the opposite of creation, it was close to the power that was enough to bring extinction to this world.

Novia's eyes were widened by the sheer power of her master, however, she had a doubt about this whole situation. She didn't know what it was, but something told her that something wasn't right.

Everyone looked up at the sky, they couldn't see a single cloud in the night sky. The moons shone brightly which was stunningly beautiful and beautifully unnerving. No words could express nor thoughts that could process what they had witnessed.

"Are you okay, Lady Uriel?" Astrea asked as she stared at Uriel who had managed to enter the barrier before the explosion happened.

"I'm fine," Uriel answered as she looked at the swords that floated around her, covered in blood and badly chipped.

On the other hand, the Prime Lord planned to watch from the side, to observe Uriel and Lenin's power. He never thought that he would get harmed by the spell that Lenin had released. He felt pain because of the radiation that caused Mana depletion, sucking and devouring Mana within the nature and bodies of both the dead and the living.

"This power... no... this feeling..." The Prime Lord muttered as he looked down at his trembling hands, affected by the radiation. "This isn't right..." He looked at the vast field that was filled with thousands of Corrupted a few seconds ago.

While the Prime Lord was deep in thoughts, he noticed something shiny appeared from the corner of his eye. He was surprised and unable to dodge the flying sword, stabbing him right into his chest. He then noticed dozens more of the swords flew toward him and were stabbed all over his body.

The Prime Lord was unbothered by it since no physical attack could harm him, however, he was wrong. He looked down at the swords that had been imbued with divine energy, burning him from within, but not to the point he found it threatening.

Before he could pull one of the swords out, Uriel appeared right above him with her cold and stoic expression. She swung her sword down with an immense amount of Aura on the blade. He blocked the attack with his left hand, but to his surprise, his left arm got cut off. He was stunned for a moment, and that moment was enough to give Uriel time to land another attack that decapitated him.

The headless body collapsed, but he didn't die since he was never a living being in the first place. The body and the head turned into black mist, then it combined together and turned back into a body, connected the head and the body back.

"So it was you..." The Prime Lord stared at Uriel who controlled the swords on the ground and made them float behind her back. "So not all humans are that pitiful," he muttered as he spread his arms and lit the ground around him with a black flame, turning the ground into a sea of flames.

Uriel opened her hands and then two swords landed on her hands for her to grab. She released a powerful Aura, enough to extinguish the black flames around her. She readied her stance with a stoic and cold expression, her breathing steady and calm. As soon as she put the weight on her right foot, the ground cracked and released a shockwave that extinguished the remaining black flames.

The Prime Lord was mildly shocked, however, since he had no face, only a dark abyss under the hood, Uriel couldn't see it. He knew he couldn't take Uriel lightly since he had observed enough that she was capable of harming him. Not only that, he saw Lenin floating in the sky, staring down at him with killing intent written in her eyes.

"You can't run, demon..." Astrea said as she walked toward the Prime Lord. "We won't let you leave this place alive," she stood behind Uriel and stared directly into the Prime Lord's eyes, resisting the torment of staring directly into the Prime Lord's eyes as she created a big dome of divine power that was as big as a basketball court.

Lenin spread her arms and sparks of lightning came out from her fingertips. The sparks attracted the brewing storm above her as thunder began to rumble and flashes of lightning appeared beyond the whirlpool of dark clouds that seemed ready to obliterate whatever was below it. Lightning struck her fingertips and around her body, summoning a storm so immense it made the world feel small, enough to shatter sky and soul alike.

"Humans in this world are fascinating..." The Prime Lord said, leaning his body down as wings slowly ripped out from his back, the wings that were wide enough to cover the whole dome. He stretched the wings, and it was enough to crack the dome.