

Evil 261

Chapter 261 - 261: It's not over yet.

Nephia slowly got back up and roared his lungs out, releasing a deafening soundwave. It was so loud that everyone's hearts felt the vibration, making them breathless. They covered their ears, but the vibration still penetrated their ears and hurt their eardrums. Lenin immediately created a sound barrier, big enough to protect everyone from the deafening soundwave.

Javi and Uriel entered the barrier too late, so they fell from the horse and began to have a seizure. Their ears were ringing and started to bleed, and their noses began to bleed as well, making Thalior and Xena panic at what had happened to them.

"Uriel! Javi!" Thalior slid down and looked at both of them having a seizure. "They're bleeding!" He looked at Javi and Uriel's eyes, which began to bleed.

Rasmus landed right in front of Javi, and he immediately lifted Javi's head and rolled Javi's body to the side, preventing him from choking. Rasmus told Thalior to do the same to Uriel before she choked on her own tongue. Without thinking twice, Thalior grabbed Uriel's head, lifting it up and rolling her to the side.

Xena was amazed that Rasmus could maintain his calm and knew what to do. If it wasn't for Rasmus, Javi and Uriel might have died because she and Thalior wouldn't know that those two would die from their condition.

"Are they alright?" Novia asked as she landed and hurriedly ran toward them.

Rasmus was pulling Javi's tongue as he used his palm to prevent Javi from biting off his own tongue.

"They should be fine at any moment..." Rasmus answered as he kept Javi's head up.

Nephia roared once more with his hands up high in the air. The moment he clasped his hands together and swung them down at them, they realized they were in the open and were completely vulnerable.

Agnesia dove from the sky, spreading her arms open to gather Mana in the air. The Mana turned into visible wind pressure in the shape of disks that grew larger as she gathered Mana and dove even lower. It looked as if she was capturing the air with her bare hands.

Before Nephia could slam his hands to the ground, the wind disks cut off his arms cleanly. Nephia growled as he glared at his hands fell to the ground. He slowly looked up at Agnesia, who was spreading her arms above her head as the flame on her body grew fiercer and larger.

Nephia had regenerated his hands and immediately tried to catch Agnesia in the air like catching a fly. He was about to crush her with his massive hands, but then she pointed down with her hands at his face, releasing two flares of bright orange fire. Nephia's face melted in a matter of seconds, revealing his deformed skull.

"Die, you beast!" Agnesia screamed her lungs out as she put more Mana into her magic, making the flares grow wider and fiercer.

Nephia tried to block the flares with his hands, but his hands melted as well. However, his regeneration was as fast as Agnesia melted his skin and flesh. He then spread his wings and flapped them at Agnesia, enough to send her flying away from him.

Agnesia extinguished the flame around her body as she landed right behind Rasmus and the others. Her breath was heavy as she looked up at Nephia who was getting enraged from the amount of damage he took. It was time for Lenin and Novia to fight him while Agnesia took her time to catch her breath.

Novia flew and floated right in front of Nephia, creating thirteen magic circles in formation, taking Nephia's attention while Lenin flew up high into the sky. Nephia was about to roar at her, she had prepared a magic formation to put a vacuum space around his head. The moment he roared, no sound was coming out of his mouth, and since he wasn't human, he wasn't affected by the lack of air.

Novia released a thick white cold mist that formed into massive needles of ice from the magic formation and pierced through Nephia's skin. The moment the needles entered his skin, the needles turned into solid crystals that froze his flesh, muscles, and bones. Slowly but surely, his body got affected by frostbites, slowing his movements.

"Try to regenerate from that, you monster..." Novia smirked as she watched Nephia's skin turn pale blue from the frostbite.

Nephia struggled to move his arms since his shoulders and upper arms were affected by the frostbite. He suddenly flexed his arms and ripped his skin open as he ruptured his flesh and muscles to get rid of the frostbite and began to regenerate. Once he was freed from the frostbite, he swung his hands at Novia, but Novia managed to dodge them and fly around him.

"That thing is invincible..." Agnesia said as she rested her hands on her waist.

"For now," Rasmus responded as he narrowed his eyes and observed Nephia. "His regeneration has slowed down a bit..." He muttered as he noticed there were still a few spots on Nephia's body that hadn't regenerated.

Agnesia looked up and noticed the wounds, believing what Rasmus had said. She didn't expect there was still hope for them to win against a colossal being. She knew that she could do something and began to feel confident that they could defeat him.

"Can you forcefully gather Mana, like a lot of them?" Rasmus asked as he looked at Agnesia.

"I can..." Agnesia furrowed her brows as she stared at Rasmus. "You want me to gather as much Mana as I can?" She asked.

"Yes, I have been waiting for this moment," Rasmus answered as he nodded. "I suspect that thing isn't invincible even with his terrifying regeneration. If those powerful demons have their limits, what makes that monstrosity not? I believe this is the moment when he has reached his limit. While the masked beings are busy dealing with Her Holiness, Nephia is already vulnerable the moment those two weren't by his side," he explained as he watched Novia distract Nephia.

"Right, without those two, this monster can't recharge his power," Agnesia nodded in agreement. "Nice observation, Count, truly," she smirked as she observed Nephia.

Agnesia sat on the ground with her legs crossed as she began to gather Mana. She had seen how powerful Rasmus's magic was, and she believed that if the momentum was right, he would be able to kill Nephia.

Novia had been playing cat and mouse with Nephia, buying time for Lenin to finish her preparations. When she noticed a flash in the sky, she realized that Lenin had finished her preparations, and it was time for her to lure Nephia away from the others.

Novia had been poking Nephia with wind, fire, and ice magic that could barely scratch his skin, but it was enough to focus his attention on her. When she had lured him far enough, she suddenly ascended up high into the sky. When Nephia looked up, he saw a massive magic formation with twenty magic circles in it that was as wide as his body.

The magic formation released a breath of fire on the edge of the circles, creating a sea of flames in the sky. The moment the fire grew fiercer and concentrated, it was the moment Lenin pushed her hands down at the magic formation from above it. A jet-like flare struck down right on top of Nephia. The flame spread like a sea of flames on the ground, turning everything into ashes.

Novia landed in front of Rasmus and the others, she created a Mana barrier to protect them from the sea of flames. Rasmus joined in and reinforced the Mana barrier with her own Mana barrier that was completely different than hers.

They watched as Nephia tried to block the flare with his wings, but they burned into ashes, and even the bones turned into ashes. He endured the jet flame, but his body began to melt, and made him fell to the ground with barely any flesh on his body. He was on his knees as his body turned into ashes because his regeneration ability had weakened a lot. However, he still regenerated and prevented him from turning into ashes completely.

Lenin had used everything she got, and she began to feel dizzy as the magic formation shattered. She couldn't maintain her flight anymore, so she descended and landed right behind Rasmus with a lot of sweat on her forehead.

"That wasn't enough, huh?" Lenin looked at Nephia, who was regenerating his flesh and muscles.

"No, that was enough," Rasmus answered as he felt the thick amount of Mana around him thanks to Agnesia.

Lenin and Novia felt the immense amount of Mana around them, and they saw that the Mana lingered around Rasmus's body. They had seen it before, and they knew that he would use his magic again, the same magic that Lenin couldn't comprehend.

"Please, Count. Kill it..." Lenin said as she collapsed and went on all fours.

Rasmus gathered all the Mana that Agnesia had gathered for him, using every last bit of them and the Mana that was still being pulled by Agnesia. Last time, he only made a hydrogen bomb that was as big as a basketball, this time he made it as big as a beach ball. He could make it larger, but he didn't want to risk it and he didn't want to make the fusion unstable.

Rasmus threw the ball as soon as the sea of flames dispersed, and then he created a nano particle Mana barrier immediately to protect everyone from the radiation, blindness, and the blast. The moment he fused the bomb, it exploded and everything turned blinding white. The explosion attracted Yaza and Kiel's attention, even Astrea, making them stop fighting for a moment.

The explosion and the smoke reached way beyond what the highest clouds could reach. The radiation and the extreme heat were enough to obliterate Nephia, turning his colossal body into small particles.

It took a while until the smoke dispersed, and revealed that his magic was powerful enough to obliterate Nephia to the point that there was nothing that he could regenerate. At that moment, Novia and the others could finally breathe at ease. They didn't believe that they had defeated a colossal being.

"It's over," Rasmus said as he began to feel light-headed and fell on his bottom.

The others began to smile and laugh in disbelief as they shook their heads. The shockwave woke Javi and Uriel, and they had no idea what was going on when they saw everyone laugh and chuckle.

"Thank you, Count. Thank you..." Lenin smiled as she looked Rasmus in the eye.

"It's over here, but not over yet over there..." Rasmus slowly looked over his shoulder and saw the cosmic beings still fighting.

Chapter 262 - 262: At the last second.

Astrea bashed her divine shield at Kiel's wings, pushing him away and burning Kiel's wings with divine energy. When she was about to swing her sword at him, Yaza appeared behind her and slashed her back with his demonic sword. Astrea didn't scream or react even though her back was cut open, revealing the glowing golden light underneath her skin. She used her divine wings and hit Yaza away from her.

"Who would have thought, Gabriel the destroyer is so easy to deal with?" Yaza chuckled mischievously as he pointed his left hand and released a beam of demonic energy at Astrea.

Astrea turned around and used her divine shield to block the beam. Her left arm had fully cracked open like a dried twig, unable to contain the being inside her. Her body was covered in her own blood, her eyes were no longer pure glowing gold, they had been mixed with blood. Her body had been trembling uncontrollably, and she was on the brink of disappearing.

Astrea was busy blocking demonic energy with her shield when suddenly she got hit by a demonic energy on her back. The demonic energy began to corrupt the divine energy inside her body, and for the first time, she let out a scream, a distorted and deep voice.

Kiel and Yaza took that opportunity to fly toward her and slashed their swords downward at Astrea. She used her divine sword, but she was too weak to block them, making her fall beyond the speed of sound and hit the ground really hard. A massive crater was made from the impact, and she was lying on the ground while struggling to get rid of the demonic energy within her body.

Aris had been observing those three fighting for almost half an hour, and she knew that Astrea wouldn't stand a chance against those two. It was a matter of time before Astrea got killed by those two, or even worse, became their plaything.

"Aris, how are you feeling?" Rasmus asked as he got down from his horse. His face was pale, and the exhaustion was visible in his eyes.

"Not so great..." Aris answered. She always put on a stoic expression all the time, but this time, Rasmus could tell that she wasn't feeling great. "She's going to die, Rasmus. What are you going to do?" She asked as she stared into Rasmus's eyes, seeing the exhaustion in his eyes.

"We can't let her die," Rasmus answered and stared into Aris's eyes. "Can you help me with that?" He asked as he sat down on the ground beside Aris.

Aris and Rasmus looked at each other for a few seconds before Aris nodded and pulled out her sword. She then reached out her left hand to Uriel, staring at her coldly. Uriel didn't know what Aris wanted from her until Rasmus pointed at his sword at her waist. She immediately pulled the sword and gave it to Aris.

"I can't do much about them in this state..." Aris said as she stared at Kiel and Yaza, floating in the sky, waiting for Astrea to get up and fight them again. "They have consumed thousands of souls and demons back then. Although they got weakened by Astrea, my condition is worse than theirs," she continued.

"It's okay. Just go back when you have to. Your well-being is more important than Her Holiness," Rasmus nodded with understanding.

When the others heard Rasmus's words, they were in disbelief and shocked that he could say it so easily. However, Lenin was the only one who found his words logical because Aris was worth a thousand more than Astrea.

"(You really don't have to say it like that, Count)" Lenin thought as she shook her head.

Kiel and Yaza realized that Gabriel, who resided inside Astrea's body, could no longer use his power or move her body because Astrea's body had reached its limit. Knowing that, they both spread their wings and balls of demonic energy formed in front of their wings. Once the balls had grown big enough, they released demonic beams at Astrea.

Aris arrived before the beams could reach Astrea, and then she swung her swords, redirecting the beams to the side. Kiel and Yaza didn't expect her to join the fight, and knowing that she had decided to join the fight, the thousands of unconscious soldiers were vulnerable, and they could feast on them to regain their strength.

"You're useless now. The body can't bear your power anymore," Aris glanced at Astrea and the being inside her body.

Astrea stared at Aris for a moment before she slowly closed her eyes. Once again, the sky shattered and it felt like collapsing, but then it felt like the sky was launched upward. A blast of divine energy was released the moment Gabriel left Astrea's body. The blast was enough to burn Kiel and Yaza's existence quite a lot, pushing both of them to the ground.

Aris used the opportunity to chase after those two who were still lying on the ground. She jumped high and found those two on the ground, hurting. When she was about to stab them, they got up and blocked her swords with theirs, creating a massive shockwave.

Aris managed to deal with both of them at the same time, clashing her swords with them at the speed of sound. Rasmus and the others could only watch and hoped that she could defeat them. Thalior took the opportunity to retrieve Astrea's unconscious body while Aris fought those two.

"Count, what happened to Lady Aris?" Lenin asked.

"She used so much of her power, which could hasten her evolution," Rasmus answered as he kept watching, thinking if there was a way for him to help her.

"Evolution? What do you mean by that, Count?" Novia furrowed her brows.

"Orthias is an ancient race, and what else is an ancient? A dragon. If you're asking, where are dragons now when Orthias still exists? It's because Orthias can become a dragon," Agnesia answered instead of Rasmus.

Rasmus glanced at Agnesia, mildly surprised that she knew a lot about Orthias' race. He then remembered what Aris had said to him about Sorcerers, they were taught by Orthias, and they could be said to be humans who were adopted by Orthias. Their knowledge about magic, Mana, and the world was from the Orthias, and perhaps they also taught those Sorcerers about the Orthias race.

"And why is that a problem?" Xena tilted her head with a confused look on her face as she looked at Agnesia and Rasmus.

Agnesia looked at Rasmus as well since she didn't know the answer to that question.

"Because it will make her forget about worldly affairs except for protecting the world. She will forget about her existence as Aris and be reborn as a true dragon since she's an Aristoria. She doesn't want to become a true dragon yet, and I don't think she wants to become one in the first place," Rasmus answered as he kept watching Aris and her well-being.

Thalior came back with Astrea's body in his arms, and everyone was covering their mouths when they saw her body. They could see her bones, muscles, and flesh underneath her cracked skin. She was bleeding, and they couldn't believe that she was still breathing in that state.

"She's dying..." Thalior put Astrea down slowly and carefully. His armor and arms were covered in Astrea's blood. "What should we do?" He looked up at the others.

"Unfortunately, we can do nothing. All the archbishops are dead, and even if one of them is still alive, I don't think they can heal a severe wound like this," Lenin answered as she shook her head and went down to her knees to look at Astrea's condition.

When they were busy checking Astrea's condition, they heard a loud banging sound in the distance. They all looked at the sound that was coming from, and they saw Yaza and Kiel floating above the ground with big smoke underneath them while Aris was nowhere to be found. They realized that Aris got outmatched by those two, but then Aris came out of the smoke and attacked them relentlessly.

Aris seemed exhausted, and so were Kiel and Yaza, but Aris was worse than the other two. Nobody could help them since they had to protect the soldiers, or they would only give those two a chance to regain their power. If they went there to help her, they stood no chance, and they would become their fodder, food to make them stronger. Rasmus wanted to help, but the only magic that was effective against those two would affect Aris as well.

Aris clashed with her swords nonstop until Yaza punched her ribs and sent her flying. Rasmus dashed and caught Aris before she could hit the ground. Aris was out of breath, her hands trembled uncontrollably, and she was also at her limit.

"That's enough," Rasmus said to Aris as he stared at Kiel and Yaza.

"Okay..." Aris nodded as she got up.

Kiel and Yaza landed in front of them while Astrea began to cough blood, on the brink of death. Everyone was powerless in the presence of the masked beings.

"That was... something... Rasmus Blackheart..." Kiel stared down at Rasmus with his glowing red eyes. "You almost won, but unfortunately, you lost..." he continued.

"You killed my creation, and you'll be my next creation, mortal..." Yaza glared at Rasmus, his voice having a hint of anger and excitement at the same time.

Yaza walked toward Rasmus while Rasmus stood there and stared right into Yaza's eyes without any fear in them. Before Yaza could reach Rasmus's head, an immense divine energy descended from the sky. The divine energy was so strong that Yaza and Kiel had to avoid it.

A paladin and a blonde woman landed in front of Rasmus, protecting him from the masked beings. Thalior and the others were shocked by the appearance of the paladin and the blonde woman.

The blonde woman looked at Astrea's body, and she immediately went down on her knees. She placed her right hand on Astrea's chest and healed her; however, the wounds barely healed. She was confused that her divine power was supposed to heal any kind of wounds, but she couldn't.

"She should be fine now, even with those wounds..." The blonde woman said as she got up.

"Who are you?" Lenin looked at the pale and beautiful young woman.

"My name is Serena Valentine, a Saint," Serena answered.

"(A Saint?!)" Everyone had the same thought about Serena. They knew there shouldn't be more than two Saints, and the third Saint they knew was a false prophet called Ermaine, not Serena.

Aris looked at the paladin as she walked toward him with a cold gaze. The paladin stared at her from underneath his helmet without saying a word or moving a muscle.

"Absorb my power... now..." Aris said as she reached out her hand to the paladin.

The paladin held Aris's hand without hesitation and absorbed the power within her. The paladin was smiling with his eyes, and Aris could see the huge grin underneath that helmet. After the paladin devoured a lot of her power, Aris forcefully pulled her hand away and then turned around to look at Yaza and Kiel. She was no longer restrained by her power, and she could use her power freely again.

"Now I'm confident to deal with those bastards," The paladin chuckled mischievously.

"You're fucking late, stop talking..." Aris said coldly.

"My bad..." The paladin responded as he swung his sword around and stared at Kiel and Yaza. "Let's have some fun, now..." he readied his stance and pointed his sword at Kiel and Yaza.

Serena glanced at Rasmus for a moment, finally seeing the man that Videl looked up to. She didn't say a word, nor did Rasmus bat an eye at her because he was glad that Videl came right on time.

Chapter 263 - 263: Survived.

Aris could finally use as much power as she wanted, and that was enough to put Kiel and Yaza on edge. Not to mention, Videl also joined the fight, had absorbed a quarter of Aris's power, and made it his. The two of them fought the Fallen Watchers without breaking a sweat because Kiel and Yaza were already in their weakest state.

Thalior and the others were shocked by how strong the paladin was, not knowing he was Videl, Rasmus's butler. They watched that Videl could be on par with Yaza, the masked being who appeared to be stronger than the other one. Videl clashed his sword with Yaza's demonic sword, and Videl could easily overpower Yaza and push him back.

"Saint Serena, that paladin is yours?" Thailor looked at Serena, who was watching Aris and Videl fight the masked beings.

"Him? Yes, he's my lackey," Serena answered with a smile on her face, realizing how fun it was to think that the devil himself was her lackey. "He's the best paladin that you'll ever know," she added as she watched the devil try to kill another fallen angel.

Rasmus observed the fight, and he already knew that Kiel and Yaza were no match for Aris in her prime and Videl, who had devoured Aris's power. He could be at ease and awaited what kind of move the fallen watchers had prepared for this kind of situation.

"You must be Rasmus," Serena said as she stared Rasmus in the eye.

Rasmus turned his head to look at Serena. He could tell that she didn't like him and was judging him through her cold and sharp gaze. He didn't know what the deal was with her way of staring at him, but he didn't want to deal with her at the moment because he wanted to make sure that Aris and Videl could defeat Kiel and Yaza.

"Yes," Rasmus answered and then continued observing Aris and Videl.

Serena approached Rasmus and stood in front of him with the same gaze pointed at him. She crossed her arms and furrowed her brows without saying a single word while Rasmus stared at her with a stoic expression. Lenin and the others were confused as to why a Saint was so interested in him and tried to attract his attention.

"Are you not curious?" Serena asked, her voice was barely above a whisper that nobody could hear her words.

"Curious?" Rasmus narrowed his eyes, wondering what she meant until it clicked in his head about what she meant. "I do, but I believe it's not the right time to think about that," he answered, realizing that Serena was asking him about the soul that possessed Serena's body.

"I see..." Serena nodded as she walked away.

Serena looked at Aris and Videl who were relentlessly pushing Kiel and Yaza. She then clasped her hands and released divine energy, turning it into arrows.

The arrows flew toward Kiel and Yaza with extreme precision even though Aris and Videl were clashing their swords with those two. The arrows pierced through Kiel and Yaza's skin, burning their inside as their existence was being purified.

Serena kept shooting arrows of divine energy and hitting both Yaza and Kiel. Thalior and the others couldn't believe it that her divine energy was powerful enough to harm the masked beings who mocked divine energy not too long ago.

Kiel was badly wounded by Aris's attack, and he was shocked that an Orthias could harm him and even threaten his existence. He knew he couldn't win, and he couldn't keep fighting her or he would disappear forever.

Kiel spread his broken wings and decided to ascend hurriedly. Seeing him running away from the fight, Yaza spread his wings and flew to follow him. The moment the two of them flew side by side, Kiel used his remaining power to open a portal.

"You think you're winning? You have no idea what's happening on the other side..." Kiel said as he looked over his shoulder at Thalior and the others.

Aris who saw it, immediately swung her swords at them, releasing a slash wave toward them. When Kiel and Yaza entered the portal, the slash wave hit Kiel right on the back, cutting his body in half before he could fully teleport.

Aris was about to enter the portal, but the portal disappeared before she could reach it. She looked so furious that when she landed, she created a massive crater when she stomped on the ground. She was close enough from killing one of the masked beings who took away Illidan.

Aris didn't scream in frustration, but when she stomped on the ground once again, it widened the crater and went deeper. Everyone was afraid, even Videl didn't dare to approach her or to tease her. The one who dared to approach her was Rasmus, and he calmly slid down the crater.

Rasmus didn't say a word, but he grabbed Aris's shoulder without hesitation. When Aris glanced at him coldly, Rasmus only looked at her with a calm expression. Aris sighed as she closed her eyes and gave his sword back. She then walked away to have alone time.

The chaos had been subdued, the threat had disappeared, and the lives of the thousands were saved. Everyone could finally breathe at ease and didn't have to stay alert anymore.

"We... survived..." Xena said as she sat down on the ground with her head lowered.

Everyone nodded in agreement, realizing that they were safe. However, Thalior and Xena's expressions turned pale because they were the only ones who didn't do anything. They realized they were useless against the demons, and they couldn't even protect their soldiers.

"Ah, now that I remember," Serena said as she turned around to look at Lenin and the others. "An army of demons appeared in the far east of South Neva. We had to get rid of them first before we came here. However, we didn't have time to deal with all of them," she continued.

Thalior's eyes widened when he heard that demons appeared while they were waging war against the masked beings. He immediately got up, thinking that he might be useless in this war, but when it was just the Corrupted and the possessed, he could kill them.

"What's the chance for a powerful demon to be there?" Novia asked as she looked at everyone.

"There's none left," Serena answered. "My lackey has killed them, leaving only the weak demons," she continued.

Novia looked at Lenin with a serious expression, and then Lenin gave her a nod. Lenin told them that she and Novia would deal with those demons since they were the only ones who could reach the far east the fastest.

"Thank you, Great Sage, Lady Novia. I will ride a horse and I'll meet you two there," Thalior said as he got on his horse.

"No, Your Grace. You should stay," Agnesia said as she walked toward Lenin and Novia. "The three of us should be sufficient. You need to stay for Her Holiness, and for Lady Uriel," she looked at Thalior with a serious expression.

Thalior clenched his fists, frustrated and angry at his own inability. Suddenly, Uriel held his wrist in her current state, staring at him with a weak nod.

Seeing Uriel understand his struggle, Thalior sighed as he nodded with understanding. He then looked at Lenin, Agnesia, and Novia, giving them a nod and letting those three go without him.

Once Lenin, Agnesia, and Novia had departed, Rasmus rejoined with them and heard about what had happened. He then watched Serena heal Uriel and Javi, who were badly injured. Not only those two, Serena was capable of using a vast healing that could heal thousands of unconscious soldiers, waking them up from their deep sleep. He wondered about the soul that possessed her body and how she was capable of using divine power.

"We should go and find a place to rest. Everyone deserves to rest after a long day," Rasmus said, looking at everyone.

Everyone left the battlefield that reshaped the terrain with intense and thick divine and demonic energies. Nobody bothered to look back because everyone couldn't wait to leave that place that had given them trauma for the rest of their lives. The journey was quiet, not a single word came out of everyone's mouth.

Rasmus turned around and watched the thousands of bodies being devoured by the sea of flames. He remembered that the souls of those who had fallen weren't in the embrace of their creator but rather devoured, turned into fuel for the Fallen Watchers.

(At the same time in North Neva)

Kiel and Yaza came out of a portal, Kiel immediately collapsed to the ground, his eyes had dimmed and no longer bright and terrorizing. Yaza looked down at Kiel's condition, realizing that Kiel was on the brink of disappearing.

"So you two failed?" A calm and soothing voice asked.

Yaza immediately turned around, lowering his head and going to one knee.

"There were so many things that were beyond our expectations, Master..." Yaza answered in a quiet voice. "But the one that ruined our plan was a man, a mortal..." he pointed out.

"And who might that be?" The voice asked.

"Rasmus Blackheart, Master. He's dangerous to our plans..." Yaza answered, keeping his head lowered.

"Find me, and tell me everything about him..." The voice said, fading into complete silence.

Chapter 264 - 264: A mess.

Kiel and Yaza went through the forest, walking side by side without making a single sound, not even footsteps on the snow. Kiel was badly injured, so that his eyes barely showed any light, and he could barely walk properly.

"How could you fall for such trickery? You're many, but why none of you could see it?" Yaza glared at Kiel with glowing, bright red eyes.

"Trickery?" Kiel's voice vibrated and distorted as if there were so many voices that spoke at the same time. "There's no trick, he hates humanity like we do. We saw it, we heard it, and we read his thoughts and emotions..." Kiel continued.

Yaza's terrorizing red eyes dimmed a little when he heard all of them speaking at the same time. He knew Kiel well, an entity who shared many faces and voices, completely corrupted and chaotic but dignified and in order at the same time. He knew that Kiel was second to none when it came to scheming and planning, since they used to be a group of angels that were taught and learned from God like scholars.

"If that wasn't being tricked, then what is it?" Yaza asked.

"I judged him wrongly," Kiel answered quietly, his voice barely above a whisper because he was ashamed and furious at the same time. "Enough with the interrogation, I'll explain everything to our Master, and you can listen to every word I say there..." Kiel continued, annoyed by Yaza's questions and accusations.

Once they left the forest, they were in disbelief when they saw a sea of flames in the heavy blizzard. The thing that made them mildly shocked was the demon army that seemed to have been defeated. They didn't know what had happened in North Neva, but they could tell that their situation wasn't far off from theirs, back in South Neva.

A masked being landed right in front of Kiel and Yaza, wearing a gold robe and white mask. Kiel and Yaza looked at the masked being without saying a word because they could see in the eyes how the masked being was as frustrated as them.

"Our Master is waiting," the masked being said in a distorted voice, and then guided Yaza and Kiel to their Master.

"What happened here, Aros?" Kiel asked the masked being in a gold robe, who was walking in front of Kiel.

"We were outnumbered," Aros answered as he turned around to look at the sea of flames. "But we won, and we lost a lot of minions..." he continued.

"You couldn't prevent that?" Yaza asked as he walked beside Aros.

"The mortals here are so strong, there are a few mortals that could defeat the Prime Lords," Aros answered as he watched the Corrupted stand still, standing in line like statues, waiting for command. "We haven't seen the Orthias yet either, which means we are nowhere near going forward," he continued.

They walked through hundreds of thousands of Corrupted from beyond the Blackcliffs, and hearing that they were nowhere near going forward, Kiel thought the situation here was worse than in South Neva.

Yaza, when he heard Aros mention Orthias, his aura became fierce that the Corrupted began to scream in fear.

Aros didn't ask anything when he felt the ominous aura that Yaza had released. He already knew that those two had failed in conquering South Neva, but he never thought Yaza would be emotional about it.

They entered the city of humans that Aros had conquered, and they went straight to the palace where their Master was waiting for them. They looked at the whirlpool of abyss in the sky above the palace, circling in dark clouds where the center was nothing but darkness, not even the stars or moonlight could pierce through the thick demonic energy.

Kiel and Yaza's eyes dimmed, no longer glowing as if they were afraid the moment they entered the palace. There was nobody else in the palace, just the three of them walking in complete darkness. Even for them, the powerful fallen angels were shivering in the cold and the darkness.

The moment Aros opened the door toward the throne room, Kiel and Yaza lowered their heads and went down to their knees before they even entered the room. They could feel the gaze pointed at their heads as if the sun was right in front of them.

"Come in," a soothing and yet unnerving voice echoed throughout the throne room.

Aros watched Kiel and Yaza stand up and enter the throne room while he followed them from behind after he closed the door behind him. Kiel and Yaza slowly lifted their heads and saw Ermaine sitting on the throne, and there was a child. A small girl wearing a bright red robe and hood that covered her four horns, her hair was silver, and her skin was as pale as snow, standing beside Ermaine with a smile on her face.

"Master..." Kiel, Yaza, and Aros kneeled and lowered their heads at the child.

"Welcome back," the child said as she walked down the steps. "You're badly injured, give me your hand," she stared down at Kiel, still with the eerie smile on her face.

Kiel didn't hesitate to give both of his hands to the child. The moment he felt the cold hands of the child, he felt like his body was being crushed and stretched out at the same time. Kiel couldn't scream or move

a muscle as he was in extreme and unbearable pain. However, the moment the child removed her hands, Kiel felt like he was being reborn.

"I saw your memories, Kiel," the girl said as she walked up the steps. "That mortal was quite something, I would fall for that as well if I were you," she continued as she stared right into Ermaine's eyes. "What a mess..." she muttered as she rested her cheek on her palm.

"The sole survivor of the Blackheart family is a threat because he wants humanity to perish in his own way, not ours. His honesty and dangerous mind aren't something that we can ignore. Not to mention, the secret that his family holds will be a game-changer for us or for those mortals," the girl stared into the distance. "He also has her by his side, that powerful woman, the Orthias. He's both dangerous and useful for both us and the mortals," she continued.

Kiel also thought similarly, and he thought that Rasmus would be useful. However, Kiel misjudged him and cost the entire army of demons in South Neva to perish. Everything failed because of a single person.

"Master, the Saint that we were looking for, somehow she's alive... we didn't know how it happened, Serena was alive and she was stronger than Astrea," Yaza mentioned as he looked at the child.

"Yes, I saw her..." the child nodded. "Not a single plan of ours worked down there," she hummed as she stared at the ceiling. "It's as if someone or something knew about our plans," she muttered, her eyes narrowing.

"Master, do you think this is his work?" Kiel asked nervously, not wanting to mention the name of the sovereign of hell.

"Him? That's not impossible, but how did he know? He's not someone who has entered the world of the living before. He shouldn't be able to outmatch us on his own, and not to mention his way of thinking wouldn't even work with the humans," the child answered as she crossed her arms and looked down at Yaza and Kiel. "This world in itself is beyond our understanding, nothing like Earth," she continued.

Nobody said a word, only watching the child walk back and forth in front of Ermaine. Ermaine was curious about the man that those masked beings were talking about. She remembered the name,

Rasmus Blackheart, and she wondered how a mortal could be so significant even in the eyes of the fallen angels in front of her.

"Mother..." Ermaine muttered as she looked at the girl.

The girl turned around to look at Ermaine, her expression softening in an instant. Her smile was no longer eerie, it became soft and gentle.

"Yes, child?" The girl raised her brows as she approached Ermaine.

"Is it possible that Rasmus Blackheart is working with the Devil?" Ermaine asked with her brows raised.

The girl chuckled as she caressed Ermaine's cheek gently before she turned around and looked at Kiel, Yaza, and Aros.

"I'm not sure, child. If I can see through his memories, I can find the answer that we are looking for. However, we don't have the luxury of pursuing that because even if we know that Rasmus is working together with him, we can't do anything about it. We failed in one of our major plans, and we couldn't afford to fail the rest," the girl answered with a serious expression. "Although it would be nice if I could just meet him in person and kill him," she slowly grinned and began to chuckle mischievously.

Everyone, including Ermaine, was cowering in fear when they heard that soft and quiet chuckle from the girl. It was so quiet, and yet it echoed throughout the room.

Chapter 265 - 265: Vulnerable.

Three days had passed, and the world had heard of the success that South Neva had achieved in defeating the demons. Agnesia, Lenin, and Novia had come back from clearing the remnants of the demonic forces that had scattered across South Neva. Because of them, the number of casualties was almost nonexistent, and South Neva once again attained peace.

Rasmus was taking a break, away from everyone, to think of future plans. Ever since the war ended, he hadn't spoken to anyone, and he stayed in the Borandi village, a small village in central South Neva.

When Rasmus was going to the beach to have a peaceful morning, he saw Aris sitting on the shore with her gaze pointed at the vast sea. He hadn't seen her since the war ended, and the fact that she was there in front of him, he knew that she no longer needed some space.

Aris looked to her right and saw Rasmus sitting beside her, staring at the sea. She didn't say a word and continued to enjoy the scenery. The cloudy winter sky, the chill wind, and the sound of waves were oddly calming for her.

"Where to next?" Aris asked, her eyes were lazy when she looked at Rasmus.

"West Neva," Rasmus answered as he watched the sun rise. "Agnesia offered me to learn about magic and Mana. I might be able to learn how to understand and control it better," he explained.

Aris hummed and continued enjoying the silence since she had no other questions in mind.

"The next encounter with the Fallen Watchers would be more difficult, Aris. They must have made plans to prevent their goals from failing, and they will be more prepared than this," Rasmus said, shaping the snow into a snowball using Mana as he stared at the snowball on his palm. "With my current strength, I'm going to be a burden in your eyes. I need to be strong enough to prevent them from escaping like last time," he used mind magic to throw the snowball into the sea.

Aris slowly turned her head to look at Rasmus, mildly surprised that he would say something like that. She had listened to the human way of thinking, and she thought it was something that they called being considerate and vulnerable. She didn't expect to hear that from his mouth.

"You want to awaken your Orthias bloodline?" Aris asked after she remembered that Rasmus wanted to awaken his Orthias blood within him. "You still remember the risk?" She raised her brows.

"I might become a cripple for the rest of my life. I know the risk, and I'm willing to take that risk," Rasmus nodded, knowing the risk. "What's the chance of me failing, Aris?" He asked.

"It's not about whether you're capable or not. It's not rare for Orthias who can't awaken their identity as Orthias when they grow older. It's called natural selection, and only those who awaken can be called

warriors," Aris answered with her head lowered to look at the snow. "It's not about if you're strong enough or not, it's about if you're chosen by nature or not. It doesn't matter if you're strong enough if nature doesn't will it," she continued and stared right into Rasmus's eyes.

"One more thing. If you fail, you will never be able to walk again, or worse, you'll lose your ability to move your body. You won't be able to recover from that, even if a Saint's power, you'll never be able to recover," Aris warned with a serious expression.

Rasmus hummed and nodded with understanding, realizing it was a gamble. However, he didn't mind the risk, and if he couldn't get stronger, there was no point in conquering the world and turning it upside down. His brain wouldn't be enough, and it would never be enough.

"What happened to those Orthias who failed to awaken?" Rasmus asked out of curiosity.

"They go back to their origin, they turn into Mana," Aris muttered as she remembered when the first time she was personified, she was one of the many, and only a handful of them that managed to awaken. "Illidan... she was my only friend... we were personified at the same time, and the elders said that she and I were made from the same Mana that got split in half," she continued.

It was the first time Aris had opened up about her past to Rasmus. They both showed their vulnerable moments for the first time to each other. There was an undeniable bond between the two, and it felt comforting for them. There was only silence and the sound of nature around them, the peaceful atmosphere that both of them needed the most at that moment.

"Are you sure you're ready?" Aris looked at Rasmus, breaking the silence.

"I'm ready," Rasmus nodded.

Aris nodded and slowly got up as she brushed off the snow from her legs. She signaled to Rasmus to follow him, and then walked toward a secluded area nearby. Rasmus followed her without saying a word as he enjoyed the scenery for one last time before nature decided his future.

They arrived at the cliff where the vast ocean was right in front of them. They stood on the edge, admiring the scenery for a moment.

"You need to take off all your clothes," Aris said as she looked at Rasmus.

Rasmus nodded and removed his shirt, trousers, and undergarments without hesitation. He was completely naked while Aris looked at his body, observing his growth. She placed her cold hands on his lower back and felt his lower spine to his upper spine with her fingers.

"You have grown a lot, even your body seems to be eager to awaken the bloodline within you," Aris pointed out as she kept observing Rasmus's back. "Your body seems to be ready, but that doesn't change the fact that the risk of failure is still there," she continued.

"I know. I'm ready whenever you are," Rasmus nodded as he kept staring at the vast sea in front of him.

Aris placed her middle finger on Rasmus's spine where the core and source of his strength was. She glanced at Rasmus's calm expression, seemingly ready to accept his fate in her hand.

"This is going to be painful, and you'll see things..." Aris muttered as she focused on the spine where her middle finger was.

Rasmus nodded with understanding as he closed his eyes, signaling to Aris that he was ready.

Aris concentrated the blue energy in her middle finger, and then she pierced Rasmus's spine with it. The moment Rasmus felt her finger pierce through his spine, he felt his whole body being torn and pulled apart. When he was about to scream in pain, he felt like something was pulling his skull and his spine off his body from above. That feeling was something that humans said when the soul was leaving the body, once they were dead.

Everything was pitch black from Rasmus's perspective, and he no longer felt pain. However, he didn't know where he was and why he was conscious because he didn't hear the sound of the waves hitting the shore anymore. He felt like he was being transported to a different dimension because he didn't feel cold anymore, only warmth.

Rasmus suddenly saw light in front of him, and the light grew bigger and brighter until he finally found himself lying in a cradle. He was confused as to why he was sleeping in the cradle and how every object

around him seemed to be gigantic. Before he could look at his body, he heard a soft and soothing hum above him.

Rasmus slowly lifted his head and saw his mother, Aris, with her braided silver hair and bright blue eyes staring down at him with a soft gaze and smile. She suddenly stopped humming and gently caressed his cheek. He slowly lifted his tiny hands and realized he was a baby, and he recalled the room he was in, it was his bedroom.

"Welcome back, my child... how was your journey so far?" Aris asked in a soft mutter.

Rasmus was deeply shocked when Aris realized that she could see that the baby she was staring at wasn't a baby but rather a man in the body of a baby. He could see in her eyes how happy she was to see him. He didn't know if it was a dream or a reality.

"This isn't a dream, my child," Aris smiled and continued caressing Rasmus's cheek. "Seeing that you're here, that means you have awakened your power," she tilted her head and kept staring into Rasmus's eyes.

Rasmus wanted to speak, but his tongue and lips couldn't follow his commands at all. All that came out of his mouth was a cute squeak and a soft hum.

"You must have so many questions," Aris said in a soft voice as she caressed Rasmus's head with the back of her hand. "I'll explain everything to you. Are you ready, my child?" She raised her brows.

Rasmus couldn't say anything, and then he tried to move his head to nod. Once his head moved downward a bit, Aris smiled when he was ready.

"This is going to be a long night, my child," Aris smiled and slowly leaned down to kiss Rasmus's forehead. "Try not to fall asleep, okay?"

Chapter 266 - 266: The past that connected the future.

Rasmus was being held by his mother, who was sitting in a chair on the balcony. They both stared at the peaceful night. The breeze was too cold for Rasmus's small and fragile body, but Aris held him tightly, giving him her body's warmth.

Rasmus still couldn't believe that he had relived the past, and how his mother could tell he came from the future. His mind couldn't comprehend what was going on and how it was possible. However, he believed that his awakening made him remember every detail of his past, or at least Rasmus's past.

"My child..." Aris carefully caressed Rasmus's forehead with her thumb. "Where should I start?" She muttered as she looked down at him.

Rasmus could only stare into her mother's eyes, realizing that there were a few details of her face that were similar to Aris's. They both had the same gaze, and their voices were almost identical, which was unnerving.

"To relive the past, you must be so confused right now," Aris said as she stared at the vast sky. "However, it's not something that you can't understand. Humans relive their past through dreams. However, for us, reliving the past isn't a dream. We are present in this moment, living the moment," she continued, her eyes were gentle, similar to when Aris stared at the vast sea before Rasmus relived the past.

"Now you must be wondering how you can relive the past with your mind from the future," Aris looked down at Rasmus. The answer is because I'm the one who forced you to come back to my present, right now," she explained.

For the first time, Rasmus couldn't comprehend someone's words and explanation. There were too many missing pieces to conclude what was going on. He wanted to ask a lot of things, however, he couldn't form a single word with his tiny and toothless mouth.

"Look at your expression, trying to understand it," Aris chuckled as she looked down at Rasmus with a sweet smile on her face.

Rasmus was shocked when he heard the chuckle of an Orthias, especially his mother. All he remembered about his mother was nothing but a cold woman who could be said to be a stranger to him. He didn't remember anything about her since he had never met or remembered her during his

childhood. He didn't expect that his mother was gentle, nothing like Aris, which made him curious how an Orthias would be so caring.

"I'll explain it to you in the simplest way..." Aris opened her left hand as a light blue energy came out of her palm. She then reshaped the energy into a string of light. "This string is my life from the moment I got personified to the moment before you were born..." she explained.

Rasmus watched the string expand until suddenly it had a branch that expanded right below the original string. He furrowed his brows, confused about what that branch was, and why suddenly her life had been split into two ways.

"That new string that appears from mine is yours, my child," Aris explained as she pointed at the new string. "Orthias aren't like humans or any other animals. We don't breed, we get personified. However, you're different, and that's why you don't have your own string; you're using mine to exist," she continued.

Rasmus tried to understand it, and thought perhaps the reason he could relive the past was because Aris pulled him back to the past, because his life was also hers to begin with. He wondered if that was the case or not, but when he slowly lifted his heavy head to look at Aris, and when his eyes met Aris's, she smiled gently at him, nodding her head.

"Somehow I can understand your thoughts through your eyes," Aris smiled and caressed Rasmus's cheek.

Rasmus turned his head to look at his string, and he tried to reach it with his tiny hand, hoping that Aris would understand his intention and question. Aris realized his way of communicating when she saw him trying to reach his string.

"You're wondering how you were born and how I could get pregnant like humans do?" Aris asked as she looked down at Rasmus.

Rasmus looked up at Aris and tried to nod, but his neck was still too weak to move.

"I don't," Aris smiled as she shook her head. "I sacrificed half of my power and life to give birth to you," she answered. "Why do you think I will die in the future at the hands of humans? It's because I have given half of my life and power to you, my child," she continued as she caressed Rasmus's hair.

At that moment, Rasmus realized that Orthias, or perhaps an Aristoria, could see the distant future to the point of their deaths. However, that also raised questions as to how she couldn't prevent that from happening, and how she could see his future, which didn't make any sense at all. That also made him realize how powerful Orthias was to be able to predict the future.

"Look at you, dumbfounded by the revelation," Aris chuckled as she nuzzled her nose against Rasmus's nose. "I don't predict the future or that it is predetermined, it's the path I have chosen, child. Your future is yours to carve, but I can see yours as well, and they're rapidly changing, which is quite intriguing to look at. The world where I'm living right now is a lot more complicated than you think if you're wondering how I choose death over living. It would take days to explain everything to you, which I don't want to waste our limited time together here," she answered.

Rasmus found the answer to two of his questions, which were how she accepted her fate and how she could see his future because he was a part of her rather than a separate individual. Another question popped into his mind, and that was how she could see his future, which meant that she knew the hardships that he had to bear after his parents died.

"Do you see my string there?" Aris pointed at her string that kept expanding beyond her time. "You must have heard that every Aristoria came from the same origin as their predecessor," she said as she kept staring at her string.

Rasmus remembered that Aris from his time said something similar, that once an Aristoria died, they turned into Mana again, and that Mana would become the next Aristoria. He found that revelation to be fascinating, and with that being said, he had been wondering if Aris from his time was actually his mother from the past.

"That's right, the one that you met and stayed by your side, she was me, but she wasn't me at the same time. Just like you," Aris looked down at Rasmus with a smile. "You're not my child anymore, aren't you?" She asked as she stared into Rasmus's eyes.

Rasmus's heart skipped a beat when Aris confronted him so suddenly, and how she could tell that her son, Rasmus Blackheart, was both him and not at the same time. Videl did say that he was Rasmus

Blackheart in this world and not Kyros, but it wasn't that simple since it was similar to Serena, who was both her and another soul that possessed her body.

"It's okay, that doesn't change the fact that you're respecting my child's memories and making them yours," Aris smiled gently at Rasmus. "You're still my son and will always be my son. Do what you must, and live for your own sake, and I'm always in there, deep within you," she continued and kissed Rasmus on the forehead.

For the first time in his life in the new world, he was speechless, unable to think of anything at that moment. He never thought there was someone who could see through him, to be understood. That feeling was foreign to him, and he felt both comfortable and uncomfortable. He was an orphan in his past life as Kyros, and he never knew how jarring it was to live in the new world to have parents.

"You can't change the past, but you can relive it..." Aris muttered as she closed her eyes and leaned back against the backrest of the chair, holding Rasmus tightly. "The future isn't determined, but many things determine your future, and one of them is the deeds and actions you do. Humans tend to forget that their actions in the past, the actions they have long forgotten, lead them to the future they didn't expect. Blaming fate and destiny while they were the ones who caused their future," she continued.

"No one is destined to suffer in life, they're either the ones who put themselves in their situations or someone else did," Aris fluttered her eyes open and looked down at Rasmus. "What you had experienced they were caused by me and those humans. However, it wasn't your fate, it was the fate of my child. Your fate begins once you take my child's body," she continued.

Rasmus was confused about where the conversation was going with those words Aris said. He could only stare and wait for her to show him what was the purpose behind those words.

"You're my son, Rasmus Blackheart. You feel the pain, the nightmare, and the suffering you had to endure. You have awakened your bloodline as Orthias now, and you do what you have to do. What I want to say to you is, bring down those who are trying to make you suffer because you're no longer a human nor weak," Aris said with a cold gaze staring into Rasmus's eyes.

At that moment, Rasmus saw the same coldness and heartlessness as Aris in his timeline. His mother showed that she was indeed the same person as Aris, only with different memories and experiences. However, his mother's gentleness was quite shocking to him.

"It's time to sleep, my baby," Aris smiled as she stood up and held Rasmus in her arms.

The moment Aris began to hum a lullaby, Rasmus couldn't resist the sleepiness because he was in the body of a baby. His consciousness was fading, and slowly he fell asleep as Aris's humming echoed and faded away.

Chapter 267 - 267: Mother of Demons.

Rasmus woke up and saw Aris sitting beside him, staring into his eyes. For a moment, he thought it was his mother, but then he realized that he wasn't in the past anymore. He was about to stand up, but to his surprise, he couldn't move his lower body, not even his back. He was a bit panicked when he couldn't feel his lower body, but then Aris pushed him down again, preventing him from sitting up.

"It didn't go well because your body could barely endure the process," Aris said with a serious expression. "The good news is you have awakened your bloodline. However, you might not be able to use your legs for a while," she continued as she stared at Rasmus's legs.

Rasmus lifted his head up and looked down at his legs, realizing how bizarre it was when he could see his legs but couldn't feel them at all. He closed his eyes as he took a deep breath, processing the bad and the good news. He didn't expect that he would become a cripple, however, he believed it was worth the price since he could regain his mobility once again later on.

"What did you see?" Aris asked, curious about what he saw during his awakening.

Rasmus opened his eyes and slowly lifted his right hand, staring at his hand that was no longer small and weak. His encounter with his mother was so vivid and real that he couldn't believe that he had relived the past. He still couldn't get rid of the gentleness of his mother's voice and the hum that put him to sleep as if she were haunting him in a good way.

"I went back to the past..." Rasmus muttered as he stared at Aris. "I met my mother, your predecessor," he continued.

Aris didn't say a word or react to Rasmus's answer as if she already knew about his encounter with his mother. On the other hand, Rasmus tried to see through her expressionless face, trying to find out if she could see her past life as his mother, just like what his mother had said to him earlier.

"Out of curiosity, Aris. You came to me willingly. Is there another reason other than curiosity that an Orthias, or to be specific, an Aristoria to give birth to a human? And that Aristoria was your predecessor, a same existence in a different mind and body," Rasmus asked as he stared into Aris's eyes.

Aris stayed quiet, and for the first time, she tried to avoid a question and averted her gaze. Her expression was too hard to decipher, and Rasmus would never be able to read her unless he could read her thoughts. Knowing that she didn't want to answer, Rasmus didn't try to pry on it anymore since she must have had her reasons.

"Now what, Aris? You know I can't walk on my own, right?" Rasmus asked with his brows raised. "And it's getting cold being naked in the morning winter like this," he continued.

Aris glanced at Rasmus for a moment before she suddenly lifted him up and used her shoulder to help him stand on his own. She helped Rasmus put his clothes on, and then she accepted Rasmus's request to help him walk, even though he couldn't feel his legs at all. She was basically dragging Rasmus rather than helping him walk.

"Is this a rare case?" Rasmus asked.

"No, there were a few cases where some of us couldn't walk for a while after they went through the awakening process," Aris shook her head and kept helping him walk. "Just so you know, this is still the first step, there will be more of them until you're fully awakened. It's normal if you don't feel any different from before," she continued as she looked down at Rasmus's limp legs.

"I trust you," Rasmus responded simply.

Aris turned her head to look at Rasmus's eyes and expression. She narrowed her eyes a bit when she saw the vulnerability in his eyes once again. She then responded with a simple nod because no words were needed. She didn't know what he saw when he fainted, but that made her curious.

Aris brought Rasmus back into the village, and everyone was wondering about his condition. They saw him every day, and he looked healthy, but then he became a cripple which worried some of the villagers. He was their savior, and they believed that his well-being was their utmost priority.

After sending the villagers away politely, Rasmus went back to his inn with Aris's help. Aris's demeanor turned cold immediately when she saw Videl and the Saint, Serena, in Rasmus's room. They were both waiting for Rasmus to come back, and he knew that they would look for them sooner or later.

"Rasmus Blackheart," Serena got up from the chair and slowly approached Rasmus. "It seems you're in trouble," she looked down at his limp legs.

Videl looked at Rasmus's legs, and he wondered what had happened to him. He then looked at Aris, thinking that she might be the one who caused Rasmus's legs to limp. He decided to join in and stood beside Serena, but then Serena pushed him away, not wanting him to be near her. At that moment, Aris smirked, realizing that the woman he brought back to life didn't like him. On the other hand, Rasmus was quite shocked that the soul that possessed the Saint's body dared to push Videl away when she was supposed to know that he was the Devil.

"Saint Serena," Rasmus nodded his head with a straight expression.

"Can we have a private conversation, just the two of us?" Serena asked, her eyes never leaving Rasmus's.

Rasmus reached the bed, struggling to sit on his own without his hands supporting his torso. He looked at Aris and nodded his head, signaling to her that he would be fine on his own with Serena. Aris left the room with Videl, but then she did the same to Videl, pushing him away as soon as they left the room. Videl brushed it off since he never tried to be likable to the others, including Rasmus, since he knew he was superior to any of them.

Serena created a divine barrier that prevented anyone from listening to their conversation, especially the mischievous Videl. Once she was sure that the barrier was strong enough to prevent anyone from eavesdropping on her. She stood in front of Rasmus with her arms crossed, staring down at him arrogantly.

"For a human, you're quite knowledgeable, I heard. For the Devil himself to recognize you is both interesting and terrifying," Serena said.

Rasmus stared back at Serena and realized she was trying to judge him and read through him just like Kiel did. He realized the way she used her words, her stare, and her arrogance were similar to those beings.

"I couldn't agree more..." Rasmus answered as he kept trying to move his legs, but he couldn't feel anything. "I don't know what you want from me or Videl, and for you to be here in this world. I'll say that I'll answer every question you have in mind without hiding anything," he continued.

"Good, that's what I want to hear," Serena responded coldly, belittling Rasmus. "My question will be, what's your thought about this whole mess. This ridiculous bet between the Devil and God?" She asked.

"It's nonsense," Rasmus answered without hesitation as he stared into Serena's eyes. "To be dragged into this mess, using the cosmic power to overwhelm me, manipulating me because they both think I'm nothing but a pawn for them to play with," his words were harsh, but his expression was still calm and collected.

Serena narrowed her eyes, seeing no lies or deception in Rasmus's words. His gaze and his tone were similar to hers when she realized she was a plaything for cosmic beings to fulfill their scenario, to be used and thrown away after. However, the difference between her and him was the fact that he didn't mind it at all as if he had accepted it but she knew it wasn't really the case.

"And?" Serena asked, still with her arms crossed.

"There's nothing else," Rasmus shook his head. "Do I even have a choice?" He asked back and stared into Serena's eyes.

Serena smirked as she started to chuckle, which slowly turned into laughter. She leaned against the wall and began to laugh louder and covering her eyes with her hands. Rasmus was watching her, and the way she laughed and the aura within her body were quite unnerving, similar to when Videl laughed.

"I see..." Serena said and cleared her throat. "We aren't that different after all," she continued as she lowered her hand from her face, staring at Rasmus.

Rasmus furrowed his brows, finding her words to be interesting and piquing his curiosity.

"And who are you?" Rasmus asked.

"Lilith, the Mother of all Demons," Serena answered with a big smile on her face.

Chapter 268 - 268: The pain of a Mother.

Rasmus didn't expect Videl to bring the first human condemned to hell by God because she didn't want to submit to Adam, the first man. He had read so many books about religions, and Lilith was one of the vague figures interpreted differently. He didn't know Lilith's true identity or what kind of being she was.

Lilith's title was the Mother of Demons, and her voice was full of pride and sorrow. This made Rasmus think about what she had experienced in hell and what kind of life she had there. However, after he saw how she treated Videl, that meant she didn't have a good relationship with him. He believed there was more to her than what he knew from books and texts.

"What do you know about me, Rasmus Blackheart?" Lilith asked as she rested her hands on her waist.

"A lot of things. The seducer of men, the demon of dreams, the night ruler, the Mother of Demons, the first wife, and many more," Rasmus answered as he tried to recall anything about Lilith from books and texts.

"And do you believe those things you read?" Lilith asked with her brows raised, staring into Rasmus's eyes.

"I don't believe what I know nothing about," Rasmus shook his head with a serious expression. "Those are the names given to you based on the books and texts of a certain religion," he continued as he tried to sit straight, but his hips were numb and useless.

"Can you imagine? Being called the seducer of men, the demon of dreams, the night ruler, and the other things they said about me when I have been living my whole life in hell, being punished and tortured?" Serena asked as she scoffed.

Rasmus slowly collected the pieces of the puzzle from Serena's words and what kind of life she had. He could tell that she wasn't a demon or could be compared to Videl or those fallen watchers. She had too many emotions in her eyes and words, there was pain, the only thing that differentiated her from them.

"Can I ask you something? You didn't deny that you're the Mother of Demons. What exactly is it to be called a Mother of Demons?" Rasmus asked with his brows furrowed slightly as he stared at Serena.

Lilith's expression suddenly became cold when she heard that question. Her gaze toward him was hostile and annoyance, however, those emotions didn't seem to be pointed at him.

"I was condemned to spend my entire life in hell because I refused to submit to Adam. As a human woman, what's the most painful thing? To give birth," Serena answered as she clenched her fists. "With that being said, I was tortured, I gave birth to demons that would rip my body apart every hour, and watched my offsprings torture the souls of the damned," she continued, her gritted teeth making her words sound more painful.

"For thousands of years, I watched my offspring born from my womb, rip me apart as they laughed mockingly at me. They were the personification of my arrogance for not wanting to submit to Adam, so they despised me and thought of me as nothing but a breeder, not as a mother that they would respect," Serena continued, her clenched jawline being visible as she spoke. "The worst part was that I couldn't despise them, I couldn't hate them because I was the one who gave birth to them. God stripped my identity as a human, but my feelings and emotions were of a human..." she continued as she glared at Rasmus with hatred.

Rasmus was overwhelmed by her words, and he could feel the hatred and pain even though he didn't try to imagine it. He just knew how much she suffered, and there were no words that could describe her pain.

"I was created as the first woman, a human. I was created with free will, but somehow, that free will has caused me this suffering. God knew that all along, and he put me down in hell because of my free will. It was all so I could fit in the grand story of his, and I'm nothing but a character to be used as a bad example for all humankind!" Serena said in a raised voice to the point she ended her sentence with a loud yell from her lungs.

Rasmus didn't say a word and listened to her because there was something about her that made her feel like a human being. He could see the amount of rage that was beyond sanity, and to live in that state for almost an eternity, he couldn't comprehend even a tiny bit of the pain and anger that she felt.

"Tell me, Kyros Revenor..." Serena muttered as she leaned against the wall, staring down at the floor. "You're a man who understands both sides, the good and the evil. You're a man of wisdom, so tell me what you think?" She asked without lifting her head to look at Rasmus.

Rasmus was taken aback when Serena called him by his name from his previous life. There was something that she wanted from him, beyond his task of destroying Neva in the body of Rasmus Blackheart. She wanted a man of wisdom who would answer her questions purely from his perspective, not because it would fit his agenda to put her as his ally.

"Compared to you, I'm similar to a child who was just born yesterday. Even if I spoke of what I believed, you would deny it because no humans could comprehend your pain," Rasmus answered with a straight face. "But if that's what you want, then my answer is that you shouldn't put yourself in that light, to be seen as a victim where you chose to disobey," he answered.

Serena began to chuckle as she shook her head.

"Because I made a choice? Because I chose to disobey?" Serena tilted her head as she stared down at Rasmus. "So it justified my pain, my punishment for disobeying God's words and commands to be similar to those humans who raped?! Who murdered countless children?! Who killed thousands of lives?! Who aborted babies?! Who put millions of lives to suffer?! And somehow, my punishment is worse than theirs?! So you're saying that my punishment for disobedience is justified?!" She asked as she approached Rasmus and stood in front of him, glaring down at him with nothing but blind rage.

Rasmus chose to be silent because he said that no matter what he said would not matter in Serena's eyes. His understanding of her pain was nonexistent, and no humans could understand her, nor could they comfort her. No humans could live long enough or be powerful enough to understand the suffering of the damned soul.

"You were the same as those souls. They were wise people before they spent their entire afterlife in hell. They said the exact same thing, for me playing the victim while I chose to for this to happen, but the moment I asked them if my punishment was justified, none of them opened their mouths," Serena

scoffed as she changed the way she looked at Rasmus. There was nothing but disgust and disappointment in her gaze toward him.

"Because we are human, Lilith," Rasmus answered as he stared back at Serena. "Of course, we have the same limitations in understanding your pain and suffering. Like I said, compared to you, I was just a child who had just been born yesterday. They're the same, none of them can understand you. Don't ask us to understand your pain because nobody can," he continued, his voice calm and collected.

At that moment, Serena fell silent. Her gaze was no longer hostile toward Rasmus. There was a realization in her eyes where she sought understanding when the truth was that she didn't ask to be understood; she asked to be seen. Those wise people couldn't do that, but somehow Rasmus could even though he wasn't that much different than them.

"You're here now, in the world of the living. If God didn't will it, would you still be here right now?" Rasmus asked. "Let's say that we both didn't have a choice, but that didn't mean we weren't given a second life. I'm no longer Kyros, and you're no longer Lilith. I didn't regret what I did in my previous life, but did you?" He asked with his brows furrowed.

Lilith thought for a moment if she regretted that she had disobeyed God's command to submit to Adam. The first thing that came to her mind and in her heart was that she didn't regret it.

"No, I didn't," Serena answered as she shook her head.

"I have done many bad deeds, but I don't regret it because I live how I want to live and believe what I believe. If you want to disobey men, then do that. Even for me, I don't kill for fun or the sake of it. We have reasons that nobody else can understand, and that will raise the words of who you are. But those words don't define you, and don't even try to prove them wrong when they're right or wrong. Live for yourself and be whatever you want to be," Rasmus said as he stared into Serena's eyes.

"I'm not asking you to follow me around, I'm not asking you to be my ally, I'm not asking you to be a part of us. You're free to do what you want to do, and you can be out there on your own, but remember, the paths you choose have consequences, and I hope that you don't regret it," Rasmus continued with a serious expression.

"What are you trying to say?" Serena asked with her brows furrowed.

"While our choices matter, we are still pawns on the board. Where do you want to side with? No side is better than the other," Rasmus answered. "God has stripped down your status as a human. Would you live up to that name or be the human you want to be? The life that you couldn't have?" He asked.

Serena thought for a moment, and the body she possessed was that of a Saint. She had seen what the body had felt and experienced. The betrayal of humankind because they followed the voices of the demons. No side was better than the other, just like Rasmus said, however, she knew that Rasmus experienced the same fate as hers.

"I'll stay, for now..." Serena answered as she stared at Rasmus.

Rasmus nodded without saying a word because no words were needed.

Chapter 269 - 269: Ignorance and blind faith.

Rasmus stared down at his useless legs when suddenly Serena offered her hand to him. He looked up and stared at her with his brows furrowed, wondering what she wanted from him. She then beckoned him, signaling him to give his hand to her, however, Rasmus hesitated.

"I can try to do something with your condition," Serena said with a serious expression. "My divine power is beyond that old lady. I might be able to heal your problem," she continued, calling Astrea an old lady.

"I'm not sure if you can, but give it a try," Rasmus said, putting his hand on Serena's hand.

Serena closed her eyes and used her divine power, strong enough that Rasmus could feel the intensity when the energy entered his body. He felt like his body had rehydrated from drinking cold water after running for dozens of miles on an extremely hot day. It felt nice, and all the fatigue in his body got lifted, but then he felt a tingling sensation in his legs, which could be a good sign.

Suddenly, Serena pulled her hand away from Rasmus's hand with a confused look on her face. Rasmus was also confused as to why she stopped using her divine powers on him, especially when she put that expression on her face.

"That's weird..." Serena tilted her head as she stared at Rasmus's legs. "There are no wounds or damages in your body. However, I can feel your spinal cord isn't like a human... slightly different..." she explained as she narrowed her eyes.

Rasmus was surprised that Serena was able to tell the difference and seemed to understand human anatomy. He then watched her sit beside him and gently pressed her hand against his back. She used a mild divine power to understand what was going on with his body. However, Rasmus told her about his current condition of undergoing an awakening as an Orthias.

Serena knew the big picture of the new world she was living in, and what kind of people were following Rasmus. She knew about the existence of an Orthias, the ancient race that could turn into a mythical creature, a dragon. She also had a vast knowledge of the current situation and what kind of dangers existed all over Neva.

"It's all thanks to the memories of this body. I understand most part because of her," Serena said as she got up from the bed and stood in front of Rasmus. "But that's not all. I have spent my whole life in hell, and I have spoken to any kind of people there," she continued as she gestured to Rasmus to stand up.

"You said that you have spoken to a lot of wise people in hell. That's quite the irony, to see wise people end up in hell," Rasmus responded as he pushed himself up, and his legs felt like jelly. The pins and needles in his legs were so overwhelming that he collapsed immediately. The pain was unbearable, but when Serena wanted to help him, he declined politely because he wanted to try to stand on his own.

"Yes, it's quite the irony because they didn't follow God's rules and words, even though they did nothing but spread kindness and help people to be better in life," Serena answered as she nodded.

"Well, it seems that their punishment and yours aren't that different at all," Rasmus said as he leaned against the bedside table to stand up. "None of them deserves to be punished for something so... trivial," he continued as he stood up, even though it was painful.

Serena raised her brows when she heard Rasmus's controversial words, and somehow it made her scoff and smirk.

"You don't obey God, you're condemned for eternal punishment and suffering," Serena said in a soft voice as she nodded in agreement.

"But that's how it works, always... from the beginning of time. After all, everything is his creation, and you would want to have your creation to follow your words, not to ignore you or to be forgotten by them. You said that you couldn't hate your offspring even though they were demons. You would feel hurt if they ignored and forgot about you, no?" Rasmus asked as his legs were shaking uncontrollably, and then he collapsed to the edge of the bed, resting his legs.

"Then why bother to give us free will in the first place?" Serena asked as she crossed her arms, leaning against the wall and staring down at Rasmus.

"I'm not God. I can't comprehend your suffering and pain, and you're asking me how to think like a God?" Rasmus asked back with a soft smile on his face.

"Fair point," Serena scoffed as she nodded. "But one last question. So you chose to believe it as it is?" She asked out of curiosity.

"No, just as I said earlier, I don't believe what I don't know anything about. It's as simple as that," Rasmus answered as he massaged his knees. "If anyone asked if I would regret it for not believing it, then I would say no. What's the difference between not wanting to learn about uncertainty and believing in something that can't be understood? Both are ignorant and blind. I don't want to be both, that's why I learn it, but I don't completely believe it," he continued as he looked at Serena.

Serena was speechless, and she had never heard anything like that before. She thought that Rasmus was trying to avoid the question, trying to find a safe excuse, but the way he said it, the way he listened and tried to understand, she believed that he wasn't trying to make an excuse, it was how he lived his life. He didn't belittle something just because they were wrong, he listened and tried to understand.

"I have lived for millennia in hell, seeing and talking with countless souls. None of them said anything like you did," Serena said, her voice barely above a whisper.

She looked away, trying to steady her breath, but there was a soft tremble in her chest. For the first time in countless lifetimes, she didn't feel like a fallen soul or a condemned rebel, she just felt like a human. She didn't remember how it felt to be a human, nor had a chance to show how she could be as a human,

but at that moment, she felt like she had found a purpose in this second life, something to live by and be herself.

"How do you feel now?" Serena asked as she cleared her throat.

"I can feel my leg, my left leg seems to respond, but not my right leg..." Rasmus answered as he looked at his right leg. "You don't have to help me anymore, Saint Serena," he said and looked at Serena.

Hearing Rasmus calling her Saint Serena, it somehow made her feel seen once again. Not labeling her for the past life she had, but the new life she gained. She realized that he didn't bother much with her past but rather the person who stood in front of him in the present.

"If that's what you want, then so be it," Serena nodded with understanding.

Serena dispersed the divine barrier, signaling anyone who wanted to enter the room to enter. In a matter of seconds, Aris came back inside and stared directly into Serena's eyes. Rasmus slowly got up, and it surprised Aris that he was capable of standing up on his own.

Rasmus told Aris about what was going on and introduced Serena to her. He then decided to leave them alone so they could get to know each other because he believed that Aris could have a friend other than him.

Once Rasmus left the room, he saw Videl standing across from him, staring at him with a smug look on his face. Rasmus sighed as he leaned against the wall, waiting for Videl to open his mouth, but to his surprise, Videl tossed a cane at him. Rasmus caught it in the last moment, and saw the cane in his hand, a black gentleman's cane with a silver handle on it.

Rasmus tried the cane to support his leg, and the cane fit perfectly with his height and arm length. It didn't feel awkward, and it was fine to hold as well, which was quite nice to have for his current condition. He tried to walk with it, and somehow it reminded him of his past life, using a cane to walk around during his old age. When he glanced at Videl, the smirk was enough to tell that Videl was also thinking the same thing as him.

"How does it feel to use a cane again, just like before?" Videl asked as he chuckled mischievously.

"Why are you being nice to me? What's the occasion?" Rasmus asked as he stood in front of Videl.

"Am I not allowed to be nice after you gave me what I want? You kept your word, giving me wars and allowing me to devour hundreds of thousands of souls and demons to regain my power. I think I'm allowed to give you something nice in return," Videl answered as he crossed his arms. "Anyway, Javi is here to send you a message," he looked at Javi, who was hiding in the shadow in the corner.

Javi approached Rasmus with a letter in his hand and then offered it to Rasmus.

Rasmus took the letter and read it thoroughly as he leaned his weight on the cane. He furrowed his brows when he noticed the letter was from Lenin, and it was about Astrea's condition.

"We are leaving now," Rasmus said as he burned the letter.

Videl and Javi nodded with understanding.

Chapter 270 - 270: The life of a mother.

Rasmus and the others arrived at the capital city of the Suvistan Empire, where the South Neva Union headquarters were. Their arrival was unknown to the public since they didn't use a fancy or grandiose carriage. Once they arrived at headquarters, Thalior, Lenin, Novia, Carrion, and Daryus came to greet them. However, when they saw Rasmus struggling to get down from the carriage, they were shocked by what had happened to them.

Rasmus was limping, using the cane to support his body as he walked up the stairs with Aris's help. Daryus immediately walked down the stairs to help Rasmus walk up the stairs, and asked about what had happened to his legs. Rasmus told him that he was fine and there was nothing Daryus could do to help with his condition.

After struggling for quite a while, Rasmus reached the final step and stood in front of Thalior and Lenin. Serena was beside him, wearing a white robe and hood that covered her face. Videl still pretended to be a Paladin who had served Serena, hiding his face under the helmet.

"Everything alright, Count?" Lenin asked with her brows furrowed.

"Yes, everything is alright," Rasmus answered as he looked down at his legs. "Her Holiness is waiting for me, and I don't want her to wait any longer," he said as he looked at both of them.

Thalior and Lenin nodded with understanding and guided Rasmus to where Astrea stayed.

The letter that Rasmus received a few days ago was about Astrea, who had regained consciousness. The world didn't know about her condition, and only a handful of people knew. Based on the letter, Astrea had lost her divine power, and her body couldn't be healed. She had been hiding in her chamber and forbade anyone to visit her. However, her last request was to bring Rasmus to see her.

"Her Holiness is behind this door, Count," Thalior pointed at the door behind him.

Rasmus nodded, and then he left, leaving Rasmus alone in the long hallway.

"Please come in, Count," Astrea's voice could be heard from behind the door before Rasmus could even knock on the door.

Rasmus slowly opened the door and tried his best not to trip and fall as he entered the room. The first thing he saw were bandages that covered all over Astrea's body, with only her left eye and mouth that weren't covered by them. He bowed at her and then closed the door behind him, making sure nobody saw Astrea's condition.

"Can you come closer, Count? I can't see clearly. Everything is blurry..." Astrea said weakly.

Rasmus walked closer and saw the gray eye of Astrea, partially blind and the dried scars around her left eye. It was as the letter said, the scar all over her body after she got possessed by a cosmic being that couldn't be healed.

He stood beside the bed, and Astrea squinted her eye to see Rasmus's face. She then noticed the cane in his left hand to help him walk. She frowned when she found out that Rasmus was also injured. However, Rasmus immediately assured her that it wasn't because of the war but from something else.

"Please, help yourself, Count," Astrea smiled weakly, her dried lips that would bleed if she smiled too widely.

Rasmus dragged a chair and put it next to the bed before he sat on it. He placed the cane on his thighs and fixed his suit while Astrea watched him silently.

"You look terrible, Your Holiness. Did you sleep on the wrong side of the bed?" Rasmus asked with a straight expression as he stared into Astrea's eyes.

Astrea coughed because the question caught her off guard. She quietly groaned in pain after she coughed because her body was aching, and the wounds all over her body were still open. She didn't expect Rasmus to make a joke, but she knew he did that to lighten up the atmosphere.

"Count, please don't make me laugh, it hurts quite a lot," Astrea said weakly as she winced in pain. "Who would have thought, a man who always speaks of controversy to make a light-hearted joke..." she smiled at Rasmus.

Rasmus faintly smiled at Astrea, knowing that she had accepted her fate and wasn't bothered by her condition. He observed her eye and expression, finding nothing but peace in them.

"Welcome back, Your Holiness," Rasmus said with a soft gaze, pointing at her.

"Thank you, Count. However, I'm no longer a Saint, Count..." Astrea slowly and carefully shook her head so she didn't feel any pain. "I have sent a letter back home. I'm stepping down from my position, and Aurelia will become the seventh Saint of the Holy Nation. So, just call me by my name, just my name is fine, Count," she revealed as she stared blankly at the sheet that covered her legs.

Rasmus hummed and nodded with understanding, thinking that there was no other choice but to give the title to Aurelia. As Aurelia's former instructor and teacher, he knew that she would be able to handle humans and read their personalities since he had taught her enough.

"May I know why you want to see me, Lady Astrea?" Rasmus asked.

Astrea smiled when Rasmus did exactly what she told him to do, unlike Thalior and the others who refused to get rid of her title even though she asked them to.

"Maybe I just need a friend, Count," Astrea answered as she looked at her hands, which were covered in bandages with blood stains all over them. "Every face that I saw ever since I've been like this, they all looked at me with pity, and I couldn't stand it. With that being said, I thought you would be someone who wouldn't look at me like them, and I was right about it," she looked at Rasmus and smiled softly at him.

"If that's the case, should we have a drink?" Rasmus pulled out a bottle of wine from his spatial ring. "We both are in pain, a little alcohol would be a great choice for the occasion as well," he looked at the expensive bottle of wine in his right hand.

"Count, I have never drunk alcohol because as a Saint, I have to keep my mind sharp..." Astrea paused as she looked at the bottle. "But, I guess I don't mind tasting the nectar of false promise..." she chuckled.

"You described it better than anyone else could," Rasmus chuckled as he poured the wine into a glass and then gave it to Astrea.

They both enjoyed the wine with a pointless conversation where it didn't matter whether they would remember it later on. The room was heavy, but it became lively, full of smiles and soft chuckles or giggles, and the sound of clinking glass.

"When are you going to go back home, Lady Astrea? I believe Aurelia would be deeply worried when she heard about your condition. I had seen your affection toward her, you raised your daughter with love and taught her how to live as a future Saint. I also opened her eyes and faced the reality like how I did when she enrolled in the academy last year, but all of them will be meaningless when her heart is aching," Rasmus said as he put down the glass on the bedside table.

Astrea took a moment to think of an answer as she stared down at the empty glass in her hand. She didn't want her daughter to be worried sick, while her daughter became the Saint with lots of work to do, since the current situation in Neva with the emissaries of demons roaming freely. She didn't want to

become a burden on Aurelia, and she knew it would make things harder for Aurelia to do her job as a Saint.

"I'm not planning to go back, Count..." Astrea muttered.

"Then why bother living if you don't want to see your daughter?" Rasmus asked.

At that moment, Astrea's heart stopped for a moment, and a needle stabbed in the back of her eye. A tear lingered in Astrea's left eye when she heard Rasmus's question because it was hurtful. She knew the reason why she was still alive and could endure the pain all over her body was so she could live for her daughter, but when Rasmus asked that question, she realized that he wasn't wrong.

"She has become a strong woman, and I can assure you of that. Guilt serves you nothing right now, and regret will follow after. Don't spend the remaining days you have left with those things," Rasmus said with a serious expression. "Stop thinking like a selfless person, your presence doesn't matter anymore, but to her, you're her everything. Live for her, just for her," he continued.

Astrea's tears fell to her chin when Rasmus could rip her doubts apart and could see through her. She slowly nodded her head, agreeing and taking Rasmus's words to her heart. She realized that she would only spend her life with sorrow if she didn't go back.

"I'm afraid, Count. I'm afraid to face my daughter like this. She would cry, and it would break my heart..." Astrea said quietly.

"Would you rather make her heart break because you don't want to go back to see her? Which is worse?" Rasmus asked. "If you don't want to be pitied, then stop acting pitiful and asking for it," he continued.

Astrea still hesitated to show her condition to her daughter, and nothing could make her or her condition better.

"If you come with me, Count... perhaps I could bear it," Astrea looked at Rasmus with a frown.

Rasmus thought about it for a moment, and it didn't sound bad at all to go back to Central Neva. He remembered that he had to get his father's journal, which would reveal the secrets of demonic cults that the world had long forgotten or hidden from reality.

"Then I'll come with you, Lady Astrea," Rasmus nodded.

Astrea smiled gently and nodded in gratification.