

Evil 301

Chapter 301 - 301: Observe.

"How many that have been following us so far?" Rasmus asked as he looked around the pub where adventurers and mercenaries gathered for information.

"Six, and there were eyes on us when we entered the tavern, so make it eight," Aris answered as she made sure the hood covered her white hair and pale face.

Rasmus noticed the gaze when he entered the tavern, and it was normal for everyone to look at them. They both hid their faces and wore black cloaks to cover their tall figures.

"It has been two days since we left, and we already have eyes on us..." Rasmus said as he took a sip of the rum. He looked at the mug and realized his tongue was no longer numb. He could barely taste the fermented sugarcane, only the fermented part not the sweetness.

Rasmus began to wonder if his body showed signs of overcoming the first stage of awakening. He was intrigued by the sign of progress, and he wondered what would Aris would do next to his body.

"Do you want to get rid of them?" Aris asked and took a sip of her rum.

Rasmus put aside his growth and the changes in his body because of the situation he was in. He could feel the intense and unmoved gaze from the corner of his eyes. Two men wearing scarves to hide the lower half of their faces, and they seemed to be whispering to each other.

"No, not yet..." Rasmus muttered as he sat straight and looked down at his cane. "We don't know what they want yet. They could be thugs, bandits, or some opportunists. However, if they kept following us for days and keeping their distances, that means they were observing us. And those are the ones that we need to get rid off, and find out who sent them," he continued as he took another sip of his rum.

Aris hummed with understanding and began to ignore the gazes that were pointed at her. She enjoyed her rum and the sandwich in her hand while listening to the commotion.

They left the tavern and they planned to find an inn to rest for the night. However, they were stopped by a dozen people with their weapons in their hands. They were showing off their numbers and the sharpness of their blades under the moonlight.

Aris and Rasmus stared at the two men with scarves that covered their lower faces. They were the same people they saw in the tavern, and it seemed they were a part of the rumored scarfed bandits that had terrorized the merchants and travelers.

"There you are... we have been waiting for you..." A man who stood at the front said.

Based on how the man spoke, he seemed to be the leader of the bandits.

"We don't have anything to give, what makes you think we have anything to offer?" Rasmus asked, keeping his face covered under the hood and cloak.

"Oh, you can't fool us! Look at your horses! They're strong horses, they're even from the rare breed! Your horses alone can give us a fortune!" The leader pointed his sword at the white horses that Rasmus and Aris rode on. "Now, since you rode that kind of horses, and you don't have any bags on you, we can assume you have those rings, the special rings that can store items," he continued as he began to chuckle mischievously.

Rasmus was quite amazed by how sharp and observant the bandit leader was. He realized that he might be standing in front of an experienced person. He then glanced at Aris, checking what she was thinking based on her stoic and cold expression. However, he could only see her nose from the side because of the cloak and hood that covered her face.

"You want to fight them?" Aris asked as she glanced at Rasmus. "They're weaker than you. You can handle them, except for that man," she pointed at the bandit leader.

Rasmus wondered why Aris suddenly offered him to fight those bandits. When he stared into Aris's eyes, he realized that she was being considerate. She knew that he didn't get the chance to blow off some steam ever since he knew that Julius and Arandil were there in the Holy Nation. He indeed had been feeling frustrated since he couldn't do much with his condition.

"Then I'll take that offer," Rasmus said as he carefully and slowly got down from his horse.

Rasmus struggled to get down from his horse, and the bandits began to scoff and snicker at him. They underestimated him because he struggled to even get down from his horse and the fact he used a cane to help him stand.

"Old man, just give us your belongings already and we will let you leave," the bandit leader laughed. The other bandits began to laugh at Rasmus as well. "Don't you value your life?" He asked as he crossed his arms, letting his sword hang in his right hand.

"Do you have a choice if I don't give my belongings willingly? Just come and get it," Rasmus said as he stabbed his cane in front of him and rested his hands on it.

The bandit leader sighed, and then looked at his underlings as he tilted his head toward Rasmus. Without thinking twice, six bandits began to walk toward Rasmus with their swords and axes in their hands.

Rasmus didn't want to use his sword because the cane he was holding was well-made. He didn't know where Videl got the cane or how Videl made it, but what mattered was the fact it was sturdy and strong.

The bandits began to raise their weapons and charged toward Rasmus. When they were at range, they swung their weapons at Rasmus. However, Rasmus was quite surprised that his body suddenly hardened and things moved slower.

"(What's this...)" Rasmus thought as he looked around him where the bandits surrounded him. "(This is as if my body is in alert mode unconsciously...)"

Rasmus pulled the cane and swung it with extreme precision, hitting the bandits right on the liver. Two of the bandits fell to the ground, screaming in pain while the remaining four swung their weapons at Rasmus. However, Rasmus dodged them and immediately pulled counter moves, stabbing and hitting the bandits on the nose or throat.

In less than ten seconds, the six bandits were defeated and couldn't fight anymore. The bandit leader was shocked that he had lost half of his force to a crippled man. He began to realize that the other

person was still on their horse, watching the whole thing unfold. He began to doubt himself that he might have chosen the wrong target. However, he didn't want to hurt his pride running away when his underlings were behind him.

"You know how to fight, huh? Then I'll get rid of you first!" The bandit leader dashed toward Rasmus, and then the remaining bandits followed him from behind.

Rasmus kept Aris's words in mind, but he wanted to know how strong the bandit leader was. He readied his stance, using his stronger leg to support his body while he held the cane like a sword.

When the bandit leader's sword clashed with Rasmus's cane, he noticed how strong Rasmus's cane was and how great his stance was. However, the moment he added more strength to his sword, he realized he could overpower Rasmus. After all, he was fighting against a cripple, and his underlings could stab Rasmus from the sides, killing him while he took Rasmus's attention to him.

Rasmus purposefully weakened his grip, allowing the bandit leader to lean in closer to him. When his left hand was in range to grab the bandit leader's face, he reached out his left hand at the bandit leader's face. He gouged the bandit leader's eyes with his index and middle fingers.

The moment the bandit leader lost his sight, Rasmus grabbed the bandit leader's right hand. He bent the bandit leader's hand and took the sword from his hand, tossing his cane to his left hand. He then swung the sword right on the bandit leader's neck, slicing it open.

The other bandits were close to him and were ready to stab him in the back and sides. Rasmus used the cane and the sword he took to block five bandits. He then dashed backward when the bandits tried to overpower him.

When the bandits lost their footings and were about to hit each other, Rasmus threw the sword at one of the bandits right in the head. The sword pierced through the bandit's skull and killed him instantly.

Rasmus dashed in and hit one of the bandits right on the knee so hard it made a loud cracking sound. He immediately pulled the sword from the bandit's skull and fought the remaining four. And when one of the bandits got stabbed in the chest, the remaining three decided to run away for their lives.

Rasmus looked at the injured bandits, and they all ran away with a struggle. They laughed at Rasmus earlier but then they ended up swallowing their own spit.

"I was wrong, you could defeat that man," Aris said as he looked at the bandit leader's dead body.

"No, it's because you said that he was strong that I could use a different approach to kill him," Rasmus shook his head.

"Why didn't you kill the remaining of them?" Aris asked.

"Because I don't kill for pleasure or for no reason," Rasmus answered as he approached his horse and struggled to get on it. "Let's continue our journey," he said and threw the sword away, and landed right on top of the dead bodies of the bandit leader.

Aris nodded and they both continued their journey.

Chapter 302 - 302: Spirits of nature.

Rasmus and Aris went into the Spring Forest, a forest with its famous and amazing scenery where two big waterfalls meet on the Spring Lake below. People believed that whoever dared to jump from one of the waterfalls to the Spring Lake during the spring season, any wish they wanted would be granted. However, because of the tall and the strong waterfall, whoever tried to do that ended up dead from the fall or drowned to death.

They went into Spring Forest to watch the people do the challenge. It was Aris who wanted to see it, and Rasmus didn't mind it since taking the forest was the fastest route to the Refenus kingdom.

"How many that are still following us?" Rasmus asked as he rode his horse beside Aris.

"Still two people, but they're different from a few days ago," Aris answered as she looked around at the tall trees around her with the ray of light trying to pierce through the trees. "What does that mean?" She looked at Rasmus with her brows raised.

"They might replace the scouts since the previous ones had been following us for five days straight. However, it could be just a coincidence," Rasmus answered as he closed his eyes and listened to the echoes of birds chirping in the distance. "We still have weeks to reach the Refenus kingdom. Let's wait a bit more," he continued.

Aris nodded and gently caressed her horse, and the horse neighed softly as if it felt happy by her touch.

They were on top of a cliff across from where Spring Lake and the two massive waterfalls were. Aris with her draconic eyes could see ants on the branches from miles away. She saw hundreds of people gathered around the Spring Lake, swimming and watching people standing on the edges of the waterfalls.

"Do you want to give it a try?" Aris asked as she tried to find the path to the top of the waterfalls.

"No, I don't believe in superstitions. We have seen demons and an angel. This is nothing more than just a myth for people to believe in, quite the irony to waste your life for a simple hope," Rasmus shook his head, realizing how tall the waterfalls were. They were at least 300 meters tall, and whoever jumped from that high, they would end up dead.

"What if it's true? You don't know this, but spirits exist in this world. They're powerful beings, the second oldest being in this world after Orthias. They're not the protectors, but they're the observers, distancing and hiding themselves from mortals because they learned from the mistakes that Orthias did," Aris revealed as she looked at the vast forest from the high ground.

Rasmus had heard anything about spirits in the Neva world, but back on Earth people believed in them, unlike here. He was interested in spirits since they were believed to be protectors of nature and punishers of humans based on his knowledge but there was barely any information about them here in this world. However there were different types of spirits back on Earth, and he wondered if they were similar here in Neva.

"Why did you only mention this now?" Rasmus asked.

"You never asked," Aris tilted her head, staring into Rasmus eyes.

Aris's words caught Rasmus off guard because he didn't expect that kind of answer from her. He felt like Aris had learned a lot from him, especially in the way she pointed the mirror back at him.

"I mentioned it now because I realized there are still a few spirits here in this place. Back when we were in South Neva, spirits didn't exist as if they had abandoned that continent a long time ago," Aris said as she looked at the forest. "It must have something to do with the wars and how they killed a Saint. The spirits might have enough of that place and chose to abandon it. Those evil spirits that we encountered back then, they were from humans' souls, not purely spirit of nature," she continued.

"And you feel them here?" Rasmus raised his brows.

"Yes, over there," Aris pointed at the waterfalls in the distance. "They're gathering in between two waterfalls, and I can feel a strong presence there, which can be a great spirit," she added.

Rasmus looked at the distance and wondered if he could see them since. He then continued his journey toward the waterfalls with Aris.

It took them two hours by horse to reach the waterfalls by following the river. They saw a few adventurers hunting for beasts to sell, herbalists looking for herbs, and florists hunting for rare flowers. The forest looked so lively, and Aris didn't feel any demonic energy in the forest, which surprised them.

"Are you sure about this, Sen? There are only a handful of people who could do this, and they're either extremely lucky or extremely strong," a man looked at his friend stretched his arms.

"I have been waiting for this moment for years. I know the risk, and I don't have anyone who would cry for me if I died. I want to do this," the friend answered as he slowly removed his clothes, revealing his muscular torso with a few scars on his back and arms.

"What about us? Do you think we won't cry for you if you die? Please rethink your decision, Sen," a woman looked at the man called Sen with a worried expression.

Rasmus and Aris listened to those three while the others were waiting for that man to jump off the waterfall. Rasmus looked down at the cliff toward Spring Lake and realized the height of the waterfalls

were at least 300 meters from the lake. It would be impossible for anyone to survive without proper technique.

"That man..." Aris approached Rasmus as she stared at the man called Sen. "The spirits are rooting for him, they're watching from the trees," she pointed out.

"They do?" Rasmus asked as he looked at the trees and couldn't see anything but trees.

"Yes, they want to see him jump and die," Aris answered with a straight face.

Rasmus raised his brows, quite surprised by Aris's words and how the spirits sounded so mischievous. He then looked at the man, wiggling his arms as he stretched his neck, preparing himself to jump off the cliff.

"So, those spirits... they're mischievous?" Rasmus asked as he stood by the edge, showing no fear of falling down.

"They are... they loved to play with us Orthias, and sometimes they brought us into the unknown and made us lost in a deep forest. In a human term, spirits are like naughty children. They're innocent, adorable, small, and yet they're annoying," Aris answered as she looked around.

Rasmus hummed as he looked down at the people in the lake, swimming and enjoying the refreshing cold water. He then heard people cheering around him, and when he looked to his left, he saw Sen jump off the waterfall with a loud scream of excitement.

A strong gust of wind was coming from below, brushing Rasmus's face. The gush of wind that felt and seemed unnatural went upward, and it made Rasmus look up. However, he looked down again to check if the man survived, even though he knew it would be close to impossible.

Rasmus saw the man jump right into the plunge pool where the waterfall hit the lake. He knew that the man would drown if he got unlucky and got stuck in the current with no chance of survival.

"Is he alive..." Sen's friend asked as he looked down at the cliff.

Rasmus couldn't see because of the strong current of the waterfall. He then saw people swimming toward the waterfall, surrounding it and waiting.

"He didn't make it," Aris muttered as she looked down the cliff. "Some mischievous spirits tried to help him slow down the fall, but what they did was actually kill him," she revealed.

Rasmus began to understand what kind of beings the spirits were. It was exactly like how Aris described it, an innocent and yet mischievous little being. He realized that the sudden gush of wind was the spirits' doing, and found it quite ironic that they tried to help but ended up leading the man to his death.

The people from the lake began to shout, and they tried to tell everyone on top of the cliff that the man had died. After knowing that, Sen's friends began to collapse and lowered their heads. It was as Sen said, they couldn't even shed a single tear, realizing that they weren't that affected by his death, making them feel even more guilty.

"I found them, the great spirit," Aris said as she looked at the trees. "Let's meet them," she added and began to walk away, ignoring the situation around her.

Rasmus followed Aris and watched how his and her horses were following them from behind without having him drag them. He took a glance at the lake below, and wondered if he could survive the jump once his body had recovered.

Once they entered the woods, Rasmus noticed the complete silence. It was supposed to be loud because of the waterfall, but he couldn't hear anything at all. He narrowed his eyes and looked at his surroundings as if he was being isolated in the woods, preventing the outside world from interfering.

"They're welcoming us. They know that we are Orthias, and they are curious about both of us," Aris said as she kept walking forward. "The great spirit commands them to guide us toward where they live," she continued, looking at the trees where the spirits sneakily stole glances at her and Rasmus.

"As long as they're not being mischievous, and don't try to help me with anything, I don't mind being watched," Rasmus responded as he walked with his cane to support his body weight.

Aris chuckled softly as she kept walking ahead of Rasmus.

Chapter 303 - 303: Mischievous little spirits.

Rasmus and Aris traveled quite far, and it had been more than two hours by walking. They seemed to be in an area in the forest that was untouched by humans. It was a complete silence except for their footsteps and the crunch of the grass they stepped on.

"The horses stop following us," Rasmus looked over his shoulder where the horses stayed still and began to eat the grass.

"Because we are here," Aris answered as she looked at the naturally placed boulders in the distance. "Those boulders," she pointed at the boulders leaning against each other.

"The great spirit is there?" Rasmus asked as he stood behind Aris and looked at the boulders that felt mystical and sacred.

"You'll see..." Aris answered as she began to approach the boulders.

Rasmus followed Aris as he looked around, and somehow he felt like being watched. He didn't know why, but he could feel the gazes on the trees around him. He then watched Aris standing in front of the boulders, staring up at them with her hand on one of the boulders.

"Come out..." Aris muttered under her breath. "Show yourself to us... all of you..." she continued as she kept staring at the stone.

After a few seconds of silence, a gust of wind blew the dried leaves onto the ground, pushing them up into the air. The leaves flew around, creating a circular motion. They moved unnaturally slow, and they seemed to be unaffected by the chilling wind around them. Rasmus found the situation to be quite fascinating and put him in awe as he looked up at the leaves above and around him.

"That man is dead!"

"Dead?"

"Dead!"

"Dead?!"

"Dead..."

"It was funny!"

"Funny?"

"Funny?!"

"Funny..."

Rasmus listened to the squeaky voices of children, like one year old children. Their voices were high-pitched, and yet it didn't hurt the ears who listened to them. He looked around and their voices kept repeating the same words over and over.

"Ehem! Be quiet!" A clear squeaky voice coming from behind Rasmus.

Rasmus turned around and looked down, finding a small child that looked so adorable with pale skin. The child looked adorably pretty with long curly red hair, and handsome at the same time, making it hard for him to think if the child was a boy or a girl. He furrowed his brows, wondering who that child was, and how the child crossed their arms and behaved like an adult.

Aris was standing beside that child and stared at the floating leaves in the air. She didn't say a word since she had been seeing spirits since she was personified, and it wasn't that surprising for her anymore.

"Shush! Be quiet! The great spirit is talking!"

"Be quiet!"

"Quiet?"

"Quiet?!"

"Quiet..."

Rasmus listened to the voices, and he couldn't help but chuckle because they were being noisy while telling others to be quiet. He found it to be oddly funny, and he never thought he would let out a chuckle from something so silly like that.

"He laughed?"

"He laughed!"

"Laugh?"

"Laugh!"

The squeaky voices began to giggle adorably, the same giggles of a baby. It was both warming and eerie at the same time, but Rasmus put them aside and tried to understand what kind of being the spirits of nature were.

"I said... be quiet!" The great spirit said loudly.

The spirits suddenly went quiet for the first time because they were afraid of the great spirit.

"Whew... finally—" Before the great spirit could finish the sentence, Aris picked the great spirit up, holding the great spirit in her arms. "W-wait! Put me down!" The great spirit frowned, staring into Aris's eyes.

"No," Aris answered coldly as she stared back at the great spirit with a cold gaze.

"Oh... okay..." The great spirit was sulking, lowering the head and feeling defeated.

Rasmus narrowed his eyes, finding the whole situation to be hard to process. He realized a few things about the nature spirits, they were innocence without empathy, wisdom without morality, and power without responsibility.

"(They seem to be unbound by law of nature as if they stand above it...)" Rasmus thought as he stared at the child. "(This is more disturbing than I thought)" he sighed quietly.

"Now tell me your name, and from which origin you came from?" Aris asked as she held the great spirit like a doll.

The great spirit slowly looked up at Aris, staring at her for a few seconds. The great spirit seemed to be observing Aris's power and her origin based on what the great spirit saw.

"Yur, from Ure, Lady Aristoria..." The great spirit answered. "All of you! Listen! Don't play with Lady Aristoria or you will be eaten by her!" The great spirit warned, staring at the floating leaves.

"Eaten?"

"Eaten?!"

"Eaten!"

"Eaten..."

All the spirits finally materialized and showed their physical bodies. They were either as big as a fly or a grasshopper, nothing bigger than that. They were like miniature babies hanging on the floating leaves.

Rasmus found it hard to believe, and it disturbed him more than it should have. They looked so fragile, but somehow he felt danger from them. He then looked at the great spirit, and realized the big gap between the spirits and great spirits.

"Ure? You're far from home," Aris looked at Yur with her brows raised.

"I could ask you the same thing. You're far from home..." Yur answered as she looked down at Aris's arms that wrapped around Yur's body. "I have been here for a few decades now, I found this place and took it as my new home..."

"What happens to your home?" Aris asked.

Yur mumbled something unrecognizable to the ears as Yur lowered its head and played with its fingers. There was sadness and fear written in Yur's face that even Rasmus could see.

"Demonic beasts hunted all of us and ate most of us..." Yur answered. "We couldn't stop them because those disgusting creatures multiplied in numbers in a short span of time in the past decades," Yur continued, trying to find comfort in Aris's arms.

Rasmus had no idea what those two were talking about. However, when he looked at all the spirits, they all shared the same feelings as Yur. They all looked terrified and sad, making the exact expression as Yur.

"Aris?" Rasmus raised his brows as he stared at Aris.

"Yur of Ure, this little spirit is from West Neva. Ure is a domain, or a kingdom in human terms. Ure is known for their speciality of shaping terrains, they're one of the few spirits that shaped how the whole Neva looked right now," Aris answered as she looked down at Ure. "You can say that this little child and all Ures can move a mountain and even turn it upside down. But it would take decades or even a century," she added.

Rasmus slowly grasped the role of nature spirits in Neva. Based on what Aris said, those spirits were like the architects of this world. They shaped the world while Orthias protected it, making themselves a team that ruled over the world. He realized that those spirits weren't bound by nature because they were the law of nature.

"West Neva? Was it the Efiva mountain?" Rasmus asked as he looked at Yur.

"Yes..." Yur nodded, keeping its head lowered, still with a saddened expression. "How did you know?" Yur slowly lifted its head and stared at Rasmus.

Rasmus remembered that mountain because it was his plan to go there with Aurelia and the other students when he was still teaching at the academy. He remembered that the Efiva mountain was the nest of the demonic beasts. Agnesia also mentioned the issue with demonic beasts since she was the sorceress that dealt with them to protect West Neva.

"From a book. So your domain was near that mountain?" Rasmus asked as he slowly approached Aris.

"Near? It was our homeland, but demonic beasts appeared and devoured most of us. We had no choice but to scatter..." Yur answered, and Yur sounded a bit offended by Rasmus's lack of knowledge. "And who are you, lowly human" Yur narrowed its eyes, observing Rasmus's body.

"He's not a mortal..." Aris narrowed her pupils like a serpent at Yur. "He's an Orthias, so watch your mouth, Yur of Ure..."

"Eek!"

All the spirits ran away when Aris showed her draconic eyes to them. They were afraid of dragons, and Aris could be called a dragon that was still in a human-like body.

Yur panicked, and since Aris was holding Yur in her arms, all Yur could do was hide its face by covering it with its hands. Yur was trembling in fear, and even though Yur didn't see Aris's eyes, Yur could feel the sharp and painful gaze on its nape.

"I'm sorry..." Yur's voice was muffled by the small hands that covered the face.

"Behave or you'll be the one that I'm going to eat..." Aris said as kept holding Yur like a doll.

Yur was trembling in fear as Yur nodded its head repeatedly. However, Aris was smirking, being mischievous toward the spirit in her arms. Rasmus on the other hand, shaking his head, found it surprising that Aris knew how to be mischievous when she had been a cold and collected being.

Chapter 304 - 304: Origins of Spirits.

Rasmus was sitting on a log in front of a campfire while Aris was sitting across from him, still with Yur on her lap. He slowly looked at his right shoulders and saw spirits sitting on it. Not only on his right shoulder, the spirits were sitting on his left shoulder and on his head. The spirits began to be fond of him because they felt safe around him, rather than being around Aris.

Yur was still sulking, scared of Aris of what had happened earlier. Yur's eyes when they met with Rasmus's were like pleading eyes, hoping him to let Yur free from Aris's grasp. However, Rasmus didn't want to since he didn't want to command Aris when she seemed to enjoy Yur's presence.

"So, what are nature spirits? Where are you coming from?" Rasmus asked Yur, trying to see if he could communicate with spirits like how he communicated with humans.

"We are not immortal like Orthias or True Dragons. But we can rebirth infinitely as long as there's no intervention," Yur answered, hoping that if Yur answered all the questions, Rasmus would help Yur from Aris.

"What about the beginning of spirits?" Rasmus asked as he raised his brows, trying to be friendly after he found out that Spirit's innocence was similar to a child.

"We are residue... born from the Mana that created the Orthias, or from True Dragons' breath of life," Yur answered, finding it scary to rest its hands on Aris's arms. "Since the True Dragons have disappeared, and Orthias has been hiding themselves from the world, the numbers of spirits are declining around the world. Especially with the current situation, those demons that tried to devour everything that we have built for thousands of years..." Yur continued with an angry face.

Rasmus thought about it for a moment, and grasped the origin of spirits. It was similar to evil spirits that existed because of the residue of their unreleased overwhelming emotions that manifested into a spirit. As Aris had said, every living being in Neva possessed Mana, and that same Mana was the fuel to turn them into vengeful spirits.

"How many spirits are there?" Rasmus asked.

"I don't know because I have been in this place for quite a long time. However, there are spirits that came here because they have lost their domains," Yur answered, staring at the spirits that hid in Rasmus's hair.

"And what happens if all spirits die?" Rasmus furrowed his brows.

"An endless disaster," Aris answered as she looked down at Yur on her lap. "Spirits is the law of nature, they control the amount of Mana that this world produced. If they all died, nobody controlled the Mana flow," she continued.

Rasmus raised his brows, finding it hard to correlate between Mana and a disaster.

"We control the weather, the quality of the soil, the plants, and even the volcanoes indirectly. If we don't control the amount of Mana that escapes or enters those things, floods, extreme heat or cold, wastelands, hurricanes, and even eruptions will happen nonstop," Yur explained with a serious expression.

Rasmus hummed, and remembered how the winter in South Neva was quite harsh. There were a lot of barren lands there as well because Aris said the spirits had abandoned that continent. In the surface, it might look normal to humans, but the truth was the continent was dying.

"Spirits feed on Mana?" Rasmus looked at Yur and Aris.

"Yes, we are eating Mana to make us grow stronger and maintain the balance. We will also release the Mana we have absorbed back to the world in a controlled manner," Yur nodded repeatedly, feeling proud.

Rasmus couldn't believe that spirits were so crucial in this world and yet nobody knew about them. There was barely any information about them, and it seemed spirits could hide their presence and existence to humans' eyes. It was as Aris said to him that spirits had chosen to stay away from humans, and it was both a good and a bad thing.

"Have you seen any demons around here?" Aris asked as she tightened her arms around Yur's small body.

"Demons? Yes! They were around lately! We tried to cleanse their energy so it won't corrupt this forest!" Yur looked up at Aris. "But... we are scared to fight them if they choose to come in here and corrupt everything..." Yur muttered, sulking as Yur played with its fingers.

Rasmus could understand how scared Yur and the other spirits were. They were powerful, but they would choose to avoid any confrontation because they prioritized their own existence over anything else. However, there was a question that made him curious as to why Yur and the other spirits chose to stay in the forest even though they knew demons were around.

"You don't want to abandon this forest," Rasmus said as he stared at Yur.

"No, we don't want to... we don't have anywhere else to go, and this forest produces a lot of Mana, so we can't let this place be taken by them," Yur answered, shaking its head repeatedly like a child.

Rasmus still couldn't feel any Mana because of his awakening process. He didn't expect that the forest he was in was abundant with Mana. Rasmus and Aris looked at each other for a moment, and they both seemed to understand each other without having to say it.

"If we choose to help you, what can you offer to us?" Rasmus asked with his head tilted.

Yur's eyes brightened like a child seeing a colorful lollipop in front of them. Yur then took its time to think while dangling its feet like a child. Yur thought really hard, playing with its long curly hair.

"You're not a mortal, but an Orthias. However, the reason I called you a mortal was because of your life essence. Your life is dimming, barely showing any light from within as if you're dying," Yur said, staring at Rasmus's eyes. "It appears that Lady Aristoria already knew about this and there's nothing she can do about it. However, I have something that can help you regain your power," Yur continued with a serious expression.

Rasmus and Aris looked at Yur with a curious look on their faces.

"You have it with you? You? A spirit?" Aris asked, staring into Yur's eyes. There was suspicion and anger written in them.

"I didn't steal it! I swear! I just found it and I have been keeping it close with me all the time!" Yur answered with a panicked expression, shaking its head and waved its tiny hands quickly.

Rasmus looked at Aris and noticed how she felt disturbed by something that Yur possessed. He wondered what it was, but he let Aris deal with it and tried to understand it from their conversation.

"I keep it safe! Nobody knows about it! I promise! I wouldn't dare to use it or carry it with me!" Yur said with fear written on its face.

"Where is it?" Aris said as she gripped on Yur's sides tightly.

Yur's eyes glimmered in tears, completely terrified by Aris's words and gaze. The spirits were squirming in fear, hiding behind Rasmus's back. Rasmus knew that it was time for him to interfere, and decided to stand up and approach Aris. The spirits that were hiding behind his back immediately scattered and hid behind the trees.

"We will help you get rid of the demons, but what is this thing that you're talking about?" Rasmus asked as he sat beside Aris and held her left wrist.

Aris slowly loosened up her grip on Yur, loose enough for Yur to free itself from Aris's grasp. Yur immediately flew and hid behind Rasmus's back, wrapping its small arms around his neck. Rasmus was startled and he didn't expect he could feel the softness and the coldness of the spirit's body. It felt like fluffy clouds around his neck and on his back, weightless and yet felt soft.

"It's the Crystallized Dragon's Breath..." Yur muttered, staring at Aris with fear and guilt. "I was entrusted by the Ures to protect it... I didn't know anything about how we had it, and I couldn't ask them because we were being hunted by demonic beasts. I didn't know anything, so please... don't hurt me..." Yur's voice trembled like a child trying to hold their tears.

Rasmus looked at Yur from over his shoulder and felt pity. He found it disturbing for a great spirit to be like this, so many faces, and yet truly innocent. He then looked at Aris, wondering why she was so hostile about the Crystallized Dragon's Breath.

"What is it that terrifies you that much about it?" Rasmus asked with a serious expression.

"It's not what, it's when..." Aris answered as she stared at Yur with a cold expression.

Rasmus raised his brows, finding Aris's words to have deeper and terrifying meaning behind it. There was a slight concern and fear in her eyes, something that he had never seen in her.

Chapter 305 - 305: Dragon's Breath.

Yur kept hiding behind Rasmus's back, avoiding Aris's wrath after she found out that the spirits had been hiding the Crystallized Dragon's Breath. Rasmus still didn't know what it was, and he could force Yur to tell them where it was, but he didn't. He knew that having spirits on his side would be a great addition because they didn't care about humanity but the world itself.

"Do you want it, Aris?" Rasmus asked, trying to calm Aris down.

"No," Aris answered without hesitation. "However, it's better if I'm holding it rather than leaving it to these spirits," she continued as she looked at the campfire.

Rasmus looked at Yur from over his shoulder, checking Yur's reaction. He could tell that Yur didn't mind with that idea.

"If we chose to help, you would give the Crystallized Dragon's Breath to us?" Rasmus asked Yur.

"Yes, I will give you the Crystallized Dragon's Breath. I don't want to carry it with me anymore because I'm tired of protecting it, especially when the demons are around," Yur answered, nodding its head as Yur's hands gripped onto his shoulders. "Sooner or later, they might smell it and will take it away from me forcefully. It's better if Lady Aris holds it," Yur continued.

Rasmus turned his gaze toward Aris, waiting for her reaction after she heard what Yur had just said. However, she didn't show any expression, she stayed still and stared at Yur with a cold gaze.

"What do you think? It's not a bad trade since you don't want spirits to disappear from this world and you also got the Crystallized Dragon's Breath," Rasmus said with his brows raised. "It doesn't seem like Yur had any choice to begin with," he continued, trying to clear Aris's troubled mind.

"Where do you hide it? I want to see it first," Aris said, her eyes never leaving Yur.

Yur whined and whimpered as Yur tightened its grips on Rasmus's shoulders. Knowing that Yur didn't have any choice, Yur gave a slow nod at Aris. Yur then slowly got off from Rasmus's back and began to walk toward the forest.

Rasmus and Aris followed Yur silently as the spirits followed them from behind, moving from one tree to another. The atmosphere was heavy, even Rasmus could feel the tension in what he was about to witness.

Yur brought them to a small lake, a frozen lake which was something that Rasmus didn't expect to see. Yur slowly floated right above the ground and began to float above the lake.

"I kept it hidden from the outside world for decades, and I have been keeping deep in this lake, frozen," Yur pointed down at the frozen lake underneath Yur. "I tried my best to keep the Dragon's Breath frozen and crystallized..." Yur continued.

Aris slowly walked toward the frozen lake and began to walk on it with Rasmus walking beside her. They both approached Yur and looked down at where Yur was pointing at. They both could vaguely see a dim blue light deep inside the lake, and Aris could feel the power that was seeping through the thick ice and Mana barrier that Yur had created right underneath the ice's surface.

"Let us in," Aris said as she bent her knee and touched the ice surface with her right hand.

"Okay..." Yur answered reluctantly.

Yur flicked its tiny hand and the ice melted around Aris and Rasmus, sliding down slowly like an elevator. The three of them went into the depths of the lake which was quite deeper than what Rasmus had thought. It took them a few minutes until they finally reached the bottom of the lake, and it looked like an ice cave.

"This is it..." Yur said, staring at the small block of ice in front of Yur. "I contained it inside an absolute ice box. It took me a whole year to create that box," Yur continued.

Rasmus looked at how bright the block of ice was to the point he couldn't see what was inside it. It was almost blinding, and somehow his body felt feverish when he was standing close to it.

Aris carefully grabbed the block of ice that fit perfectly in her hand. She slowly used Mana to melt the block of ice, releasing and revealing the Crystallized Dragon's Breath that had been kept hidden from the world for more than centuries.

The moment the ice melted completely, a gust of wind was released, coming from the Crystallized Dragon's Breath. The wind was so strong it cracked the whole ice in the lake. Rasmus felt something was breathing behind him and he was so sure that he heard a deep and yet quiet growl when he felt that.

They knew it would be unsafe, so Yur manipulated the wind and made the three of them out of the lake. Rasmus was still confused by what he had just felt earlier, and although his sense of touch and still numb, he could feel the cold that lingered on his neck. He realized the cold wasn't something natural, it would be something beyond his understanding and logic.

As soon as they landed on the side of the lake, the frozen lake shattered and turned into a fine dust of ice. They watched as they found dust of ice getting blown by the gust of wind into the sky. It looked beautiful when it shone by the moonlight.

"If a mortal got hit by that breath, they would have gotten shredded into pieces," Yur said, staring at Rasmus. "So you're truly an Orthias since you can handle that breath," Yur continued.

Rasmus didn't expect the gust of wind that he felt earlier was a breath, not something magical. He began to understand what he felt down there, the hum and the cold breath. He then glanced at the Crystallized Dragon's Breath in Aris's hand, a translucent sphere with a glowing bright blue tiny sphere at its center like a reactor. There was fog in between the glowing sphere to the outer sphere as if the smoke or the cold breath was frozen in time.

Rasmus had thought about it for a while ever since he underwent an awakening process in which he seemed to be immune to Aris's overwhelming energy. He wondered if his immunity to her power and that breath was a similar thing, but he didn't feel feverish when Aris released her energy, unlike the Dragon's Breath that made him feel cold and hot at the same time.

Aris stared at it with a cold gaze, her hand didn't move a muscle and there was nothing in her eyes. It was the first time that Rasmus couldn't see what was in her mind as if she was in a trance. Suddenly a spirit flew toward them from the sky, diving really fast that it moved faster than the speed of sound.

"Yur! This is bad!" The spirit squeaked in a high-pitched voice. "Demons! The Demons suddenly came into the forest!" The spirit continued, closing its eyes as it screamed its lungs out.

Aris glanced at the spirit, and her gaze was enough to make the spirit shut its mouth with both hands. She then stored the Crystallized Dragon's Breath into Rasmus's spatial ring, and then pulled out her sword from it at the same time.

"They must have sensed the overwhelming Mana that this thing released earlier," Aris said as she stared into the distance.

When Aris was about to go toward the demons that she had sensed, she heard a crack in her finger. That was when she realized the spatial ring couldn't contain the Crystallized Dragon's Breath. She immediately pulled out the Crystallized Dragon's Breath from the ring before it completely broke the ring. She looked at it and thought about where she should put it in a safe place.

"You hold this..." Aris approached Rasmus as she reached out her hand with the Crystallized Dragon's Breath in it to Rasmus. "Don't stare at it, don't answer a thing, don't say a word, and don't move a muscle..." she warned as she stared into Rasmus's eyes.

Rasmus hesitated to hold the Crystallized Dragon's Breath after he heard Aris's warning. Something was telling him that he shouldn't hold it, however, knowing that Aris had to go and deal with the demons that were coming to take it away. With a heavy heart, he reached for the Crystallized Dragon's Breath and held it with both hands.

As soon as Rasmus held the Crystallized Dragon's Breath, his surroundings turned pitch black. He could see anything, not even the tip of his nose, and the thing he also noticed was the fact that he was alone. He didn't feel any presence around him until suddenly he felt a looming presence as if a mountain was behind him.

At the same time, Aris, Yur, and the spirits stared at Rasmus, and he was standing still, staring at the Crystallized Dragon's Breath with an empty gaze. He had a similar gaze to Aris' earlier as if he was in a trance.

"He..." Yur paused, turning its head to Aris. "What's happening to him?"

"He's meeting the one who breathed that thing..." Aris answered as she walked away and swung her sword around. "Keep him safe, and I'll deal with these demons for you..." she said and then flew away.

Chapter 306 - 306: Seeds.

Rasmus wanted to turn around to look at the thing that was as big and tall as a mountain. However, he remembered what Aris had warned him to not answer, to not speak, and to not move. He hated the feeling of not knowing when he felt like he was in an imminent danger.

He tried to calm himself down by closing his eyes and controlling his breath. He knew that Aris wouldn't put him in danger if she knew there was even a slight risk of getting hurt. He did his best to lower his heartbeat that was racing so fast that he could feel the pulse behind his eyes and in his ears.

When Rasmus finally calmed down, a cold gust of wind pushed him down. He almost fell and hit the ground, but he managed to bend his right knee. He then realized that he wasn't crippling nor did he feel weak. He also could feel the cold of the wind, which made him think if he was in a dream or in another realm.

While Rasmus was deep in thought about what was going on, another gust of wind pushed him down to his knee. He was a bit irritated by the gust of wind until it clicked in his head.

"(It's not a wind...)" Rasmus thought, his body stopped moving and tried not to move a muscle. "(It's breath...)" His eyes widened by the fact that a breath could push him down and was powerless.

Rasmus tried to imagine how big the creature was that a breath was enough to make him fall to his knee. He couldn't imagine it, and if he could make a guess, the creature should be as big and as wide as a mountain.

The more he focused on the presence behind him, the clearer the sound of his breathing was. He felt every hair on his body rose, and he could feel the intimidating and unworldly gaze that was pointed at him. He then heard rumblings that sounded like giant boulders hitting each other as if the creature was leaning back, straightening its back.

He knew the creature was big, but it felt like it could grow even taller. When he heard the loud sound of flapping like a cloth being spread widely in an instant, he felt the sky was being covered. He knew at that moment what kind of creature that stood behind him.

"(A dragon...)" Rasmus thought as his heart raced uncontrollably.

He heard a rough surface that was being grazed in front of him like the sound of a massive avalanche. It felt like the land or even the world was being reshaped, and he knew it was the tail of the dragon.

"(How big this thing is...)" Rasmus closed his eyes, trying to calm himself down.

He had seen Hell, an Angel, and the Devil himself, but it wasn't as overwhelming as what he felt at this moment. He felt powerless back then when he was brought to hell by Videl for fun, but this powerlessness was completely different from that moment. The powerlessness that he felt in this moment was worse than being insignificant.

Suddenly, a heart-wrenching growl was heard from behind. The world that Rasmus was brought to was trembling as if it feared the dragon, feeling as powerless as him. The growl grew louder and deeper, starting to make him feel sick and made him want to pass out.

Rasmus slowly put his hands on the ground that felt cold and a bit soft. He tried to stay awake, but as the growl grew louder and didn't show any sign of stopping, was slowly losing his consciousness.

The dragon began to roar, and it sounded like the sky was being torn apart. The fierce rumblings of thunder sounded nothing compared to the roar of the dragon. It made Rasmus grunt in pain because every bone, every organ, and his heart were being crushed by the sound wave.

"Who dares to make my son kneel..." A familiar voice was heard in front of Rasmus.

Rasmus slowly lifted his head and looked at the woman that seemed unaffected by the darkness. He could see his late mother in her white dress standing in front of him as she stared at the dragon behind him.

"Ah so it's you..." Rasmus's mother stared coldly at the dragon. "I'm borrowing my power back for this one, child. So just go to sleep and let your mother deal with the true dragon..."

Rasmus felt the gentle touch of the cold hand of his late mother on his shoulder before he slowly fainted and collapsed.

At the same time in the forest, Aris stood still with a sword in her hand in an open space. She could feel dozens of demonic energies coming from in front of her. The energy was thick, similar to when Aris fought the Demon Kings. They weren't a threat to her, but since she took the Crystallized Dragon's Breath, she had to protect the forest and she couldn't damage the forest. She didn't actually care about it, but she considered Rasmus and she didn't want to ruin whatever plan he had with the spirit.

Aris gathered Mana from the forest and created a pure Mana ball in her left hand. It was enough to attract the demons attention because they believed it was the same energy that they felt from the Crystallized Dragon's Breath.

As soon as the Demon Kings walked out of the woods and entered the open space, it was revealed that they possessed human bodies, strong bodies that were strong enough to contain their existence. They realized they were being lured by Aris. Before they could even think of running away, Aris used that ball of pure Mana and created a powerful Mana barrier. The Demon Kings knew about Aris and Rasmus's whereabouts since they were informed by the people that had been following those two. They were ready to face them, and knew that they would fight them anytime soon.

The Demon Kings slowly ripped the skin and the flesh off of the human bodies they possessed, revealing their true forms to Aris. They were two times bigger than Aris in size even though Aris was already tall even for tall humans. They slowly grew their claws and fangs as they ripped their backs for their wings to grow and then spread them widely. It would put any mortal to kneel, trembling, but not Aris because to her, they were nothing but pests that needed to be exterminated.

Yur and the other spirits were watching in the distance from the top of the highest hill in the forest. They saw demonic energy clash with Mana, and how the demonic energy was absorbing the Mana and making the Demon Kings stronger. However, for Yur, the Demon Kings' fates had been decided the

moment they were trapped in the barrier. Yur knew how strong Orthias were, and not to mention an Aristoria.

"Great Spirit... is Lady Aristoria going to be okay?" A spirit asked as it floated behind Yur.

"Lady Aristoria will be fine. Nothing can stop her," Yur answered, its eyes focused on the clashes between Aris and the Demon Kings, using only two swords to fight dozens of Demon Kings simultaneously. "All of you have been living for hundreds of years, so you don't know much about what Aristoria truly is," Yur continued, crossing its tiny arms.

"Who is Aristoria, and what are they?" A spirit asked.

"Aristoria is a special or an anomaly in this world. They're birthed by the world itself with immense power, intelligence, and unlimited growth because they're the protectors of this world. Although it sounds powerful and it's in fact that they're untouchable by any law, Aristoria isn't the final form..." Yur explained, narrowing its eyes. "They're basically seeds, and they will bloom into something more powerful, a power that none of you can imagine. They're meant to become True Dragons, no longer the protector but the ruler of the world," Yur revealed.

The spirits floated there, no longer whispering but watching and witnessing the battle in silence. They watched how Aris moved, not like a warrior, but like a law being rewritten, every slash corrected the presence of evil as if it was never meant to exist. The Demon Kings believed they were hunting the breath. But they had entered the den of its future heir.

They watched how flawless Aris's moves were, as if she was defying the law of physics by the way she moved. The Demon Kings, who were many, felt powerless and overwhelmed by her. The worst part was the fact that Aris didn't try to kill them, she was toying with them until they felt nothing but fear and desperation first.

In the end, there was nothing but silence as if the night was as peaceful as ever. Yur and the spirits watched the Mana barrier dissipate and the only one that was still standing was Aris, unscathed, unscratched, and didn't break any sweat or show any heavy breath.

"Amazing!" The spirits' words echoed throughout the night.

Chapter 307 - 307: True Dragon.

Aris landed on the highest cliff in the forest, and she saw Rasmus sitting on the ground with his legs folded. His gaze was empty, staring directly into the Crystallized Dragon's Breath. She decided to approach him, but she didn't want to disturb him because she knew it would worsen his condition.

Aris sat in front of Rasmus, her gaze pointed at his eyes, checking for any signs of life in his eyes. She found something disturbing within his body, the dimming light that Yur mentioned, it grew dimmer. She was a bit disturbed by it, and then looked down at the Crystallized Dragon's Breath.

"Wake me up if there are more demons coming," Aris said as she placed her hand on top of the Crystallized Dragon's Breath. "Otherwise, don't bother me..." she muttered as she closed her eyes.

Yur pressed its tiny hands together, and in a matter of a second, the ground around Aris and Rasmus rose, creating a dome to protect them. Yur then spread its arms and turned the soil into liquid state, forming around the dome to create a massive cave.

Yur lifted its hands up high into the sky and instantly roots appeared around the cave and began to sprout. Trees and grass began to decorate the area around the cave and hid it from anyone that tried to look for them from the sky.

Yur clapped its hands and suddenly a thick mist descended from the sky. The cave and the tall trees were shrouded by it, making it even harder for anyone to find Aris and Rasmus.

"Please come back safely, Lady Aris..." Yur frowned like a child that was about to cry.

Aris entered the realm where Rasmus was dragged into. She wanted to see how he was until she saw Rasmus lying unconsciously with a Mana barrier that protected him. She then looked at the distance, and at that moment she was shocked when she saw her predecessor, Aristoria Blackheart, Rasmus's late mother.

Aris couldn't help but watch how Aristoria confronted a True Dragon whose head could reach the sky when it stood tall. She watched how Aristoria released a blood red liquid from thin air, floating and

moving around her body. She was shocked because the liquid that surrounded Aristoria was Dragon's Blood.

Aristoria walked toward the True Dragon that hadn't shown its appearance, only its glowing bright blue eyes that were as big as the moon in the sky. She slowly coated her body with Dragon's Blood, hardened it and made it into armor. She then transformed the remaining blood to become a sword, the sword that said to be powerful enough to kill a True Dragon.

"The Solar Sword..." Aris muttered as she stared at the dark red long sword with the blade that glowed a bright orange color. "It wasn't missing or destroyed, it was made of the Dragon's Blood, and she..." she paused as she clenched her fists and slowly turned her head to look at Rasmus.

Aris thought she knew everything, but it appeared there were secrets that even Orthias failed to discover. She wondered from which True Dragon that blood originated, and how Aristoria had it. And the last mystery was if Rasmus possessed that blood within him, and if it was the answer to how Aristoria could reproduce like a human and brought Rasmus to this world.

While Aris was deep in thought, suddenly Aristoria jumped high. The void realm seemed endless and limitless, and she was reaching the height that was beyond the clouds could reach. Aris couldn't help but pause her thought and stared at Aristoria up high in the void sky.

Aristoria swung the Solar Sword and finally showed its true power. The Solar Sword was caught in a bright white flame. The flame was so fierce that it released a massive flare that almost reached the ground from where she floated. She then slowly made a circular motion with the sword, creating a massive ring of fire that could easily devour the tallest mountain.

At that moment, Aris and Aristoria could see the appearance of a True Dragon. A black dragon with its massive eight wings on its back and massive claws hands that could pull a mountain from the ground. Its massive head and mouth that could crush and devour the mountains in a single bite.

"You made my child kneel, and I shall make you kneel..." Aristoria smiled gently at the True Dragon.

The True Dragon stared at Aristoria without showing any fear or concern in its eyes as if she was insignificant. However, both Aris and Aristoria could see the uncertainty in the dragon's eyes. The True Dragon found Aristoria to be a threat, not something that it could ignore.

In less than a second, thousands of massive magic formations appeared up high above Aristoria. The True Dragon created such complicated magic formations with unknown runic language that even the Magic Tower couldn't decipher. If Rasmus was awake and saw those magic formations, he would find out that the runes originated from a draconic language, borrowing the language of the most powerful being in Neva, the Dragon's Tongue.

The moment the True Dragon activated the magic formations, the void realm was turned into a realm of chaos. Blizzards, thunderstorms, tornadoes of fire, water, and wind, wildfires, and seas of flames happened simultaneously and were in harmony. Each of them would have overwhelmed the others, but they existed in unison with a single purpose and that was to obey the will of the True Dragon.

A single droplet of water from the thunderstorm would be enough to cut diamonds. The tiny snowflake would be enough to freeze the ocean the moment it made contact with water. The heat of the fire would be enough to melt everything in a matter of seconds. The gust of wind from the storm would shred everything into nothingness. However, Aristoria was there, floating unaffected by those things because of the Dragon's Blood armor on her body.

Aris had no choice but to enter the Mana barrier to stay by Rasmus's side. She reinforced the barrier with her own energy, making sure the catastrophe wouldn't harm her or Rasmus. It was the first time she had seen a True Dragon since they had been long gone for thousands of years.

"What's the point of showing your power here? We both are already dead, and you can't kill what's already dead!" Aristoria said as she began to flew toward the True Dragon.

Aristoria swung the Solar Sword, creating a slash wave and the fire wave that could easily cut the biggest mountain in half. However, when the attack reached the True Dragon, it was only scratching its thick scales. She found it interesting and decided to add more power to her attack, releasing dozens of slash waves in a matter of seconds.

The True Dragon took the hits, and somehow a being that was called the Ruler of the World got pushed quite far from an Aristoria. The True Dragon felt the heat on its chest, and when it looked down at its chest, there was evidence that its scales had melted and almost revealed its skin. The True Dragon realized that Aristoria was indeed a dangerous threat, and it had no choice but to get rid of her from the void realm.

The True Dragon roared with its mouth pointed at Aristoria, and that was enough to send her flying hundreds of miles away in almost an instant. However, it wasn't enough to hurt her, and she immediately flew back as she put more Mana into the Solar Sword, making it shine brighter like the sun on a sunny day.

Aris watched a tiny dot in the far distance, it was Aristoria that was trying to fight the True Dragon again. She watched how the Solar Sword began to ooze a massive flare of bright orange flame. She watched Aristoria swung her sword rapidly, sending slash waves and flame waves at fifty times the speed of sound, reaching where the True Dragon was in just a few seconds. She had never seen such powerful attacks like that before, and she wanted that Solar Sword for herself if she could possess it.

The True Dragon spread its eight wings and flapped them to distort the attacks, but to its surprise, the attacks couldn't be stopped and hit the True Dragon right on the chest where its skin was exposed from earlier attacks. Knowing that the True Dragon could be harmed, it began to flap its wings again and began to ascend into the sky. A dragon was the sovereign of the sky, and when it entered its reign, nothing in the world could defeat a dragon.

"Finally, you take this fight seriously," Aristoria smirked as she watched the True Dragon ascend into the sky. "Now that you're up high in the sky, that means your fall is going to be more disgraceful," she added and flew toward the True Dragon.

Chapter 308 - 308: Clash of giants.

The battle was fierce, even Aris couldn't help but awe and was terrified by the power of her predecessor and the True Dragon. She watched as the Dragons released beams of energy that could create a deep hole in the world. She also observed how powerful Aristoria's attacks forced the True Dragon to dodge them.

Every clash of might between those two was enough to crack the void realm. It was dangerous for Aris and Rasmus because the moment the realm broke, the power within the Dragon's Breath would be released into the real world. That amount of energy could turn every living being to bring chaos.

The Dragon's Breath possessed something mythical, a power that granted anyone its power. However, nobody in Neva could control that power, and it would bring chaos to the world until there was nothing left to break.

Aris didn't want that to happen because she didn't want to get affected by it. She didn't care about anyone, but she cared for her own well-being. No matter how strong she was, if the energy from within the Dragon's Breath got released, she would be consumed by it.

"Should I interfere..." Aris muttered as she looked down at Rasmus's body. She seemed to be asking herself and Rasmus, who was unconscious.

Before Aris could make up her mind, she heard a deafening sonic wave from above. She immediately looked up and saw the True Dragon was falling with its back on the bottom. She then saw Aristoria remove the Dragon's Blood from her body and put them all on the Solar Sword. She watched as the sword had become longer and wider, and the moment it got fed by Mana, the blinding light and the fierce massive flare were produced by the Solar Greatsword.

The True Dragon knew that its size was the reason Aris could win against it. The True Dragon immediately condensed its existence and compressed it into a smaller vessel. In less than ten seconds, the colossal body of the True Dragon became very small. The size was only four times the size of a human, and it became a mix of a human body and a dragon body, becoming draconic.

The True Dragon created a sword from thin air with its own life force. A black greatsword that matched the Solar Greatsword's power. The True Dragon flew toward Aristoria and swung its sword at her with all its might.

The clash between the two beings and their weapons was different from what Aris had expected. She expected to see a shockwave, a massive and destructive wave, however, what she found was the opposite. There was no shockwave, only a pure black ball with blinding lights around it as if the light itself was being devoured by the ball.

There was no sound as if Aris had lost her hearing, but she knew the ball was devouring everything, including light and sound. She remembered what Rasmus had said to her about the universe and something that was called Singularity. She could finally see it with her eyes about the thing called black hole.

"You want to release your power into the world of the living?" Aristoria stared at the True Dragon's eyes. "I won't let you do that..." She held her Solar Greatsword with both hands and used all her might to disperse the singularity. "I won't let you go back into the world of the living..." she added and began to push and pull her sword simultaneously at the ball.

Aristoria was about to break the ball, but then the True Dragon used its wings like its own limbs. The wings pierced through Aristoria's ribs into her body, stopping her from destroying the singularity that would devour the void realm and release the True Dragon from the realm of limbo.

Aristoria lost her strength as the True Dragon absorbed her power from within. However, Aristoria smirked at the True Dragon and then glanced at something right behind the True Dragon's ear.

Aris pierced the True Dragon's back and pushed her black greatsword upward, cutting the True Dragon's torso in half. If it wasn't for Aristoria's battle and the Solar Greatsword that managed to melt the impenetrable scales, Aris wouldn't be able to stab the True Dragon's back.

Aris pulled the True Dragon's wings from its core and threw the True Dragon down. The impact was enough to create a massive crater that could turn into a massive lake.

"Thank you..." Aristoria said and then immediately swung her sword at the singularity.

The moment the ball was dispersed, a deafening blast pushed both of them to the ground in a split second. The distance they were from the ground was hundreds of meters away, and yet they fell to the ground in a split second.

Aris fainted for a few seconds, and the moment she regained consciousness, she jolted and looked around. She was worried about Rasmus, but to her surprise, Aristoria was there, watching her son sleeping so soundly and safely inside the barrier.

Aris hesitated to approach Aristoria because it felt surreal for her to see her predecessor. As an Aristoria, Aris and Aristoria shared the same essence, the same Mana, and basically the same person in a different timeline.

"What do they call you?" Aristoria asked without looking at Aris.

"Aris, Rasmus calls me Aris," Aris answered as she began to walk toward Aristoria. "I don't want to be defined as Aristoria, but as Aris," she pointed out.

"That name," Aristoria scoffed softly as she kept her eyes on Rasmus. "I also felt the same way. I let my husband call me Aris, and only him that could call me that," she smiled.

Aris stood beside Aristoria, and she was a lot taller than Aristoria. Aristoria's height was around Aris's shoulder, and she looked slimmer and less muscular than Aris. Aris was curious as to why her predecessor looked so small and fragile, and yet way stronger than her.

"It's because I have lived for more than two hundred years before I died, Aris," Aristoria said as she looked up at Aris. "You on the other hand, are nothing but fledgling," she chuckled as she reached Aris's head and gently caressed her head.

Aris hated it when someone touched her, however, she didn't mind it at all when Aristoria did it. There was unexplained comfort and longing, and she believed it could be because they were the same person.

"You're as young as my child, aren't you?" Aristoria asked with her brows raised.

"Yes, I was born not long after you died based on what Sanya said to me," Aris nodded.

"Sanya is still alive? That loner?" Aristoria asked as she kept caressing Aris's hair.

Aris nodded without saying a word, agreeing with Aristoria's words. Sanya was an Orthias that had a unique way of thinking that even the elders couldn't understand. She always wandered on her own and always came back with lots of information from the humans she associated with.

"Hmm? What's this?" Aristoria furrowed her brows and tilted her head as she stared at Aris's blue-ish strands of hair among the silver ones. "You have been through a lot, didn't you?" She stared into Aris's eyes.

"The world has become a mess ever since you died. Things have become a mess ever since then," Aris answered as she gently pushed Aristoria's hand away from her hair. "I don't want to become like that

thing..." She turned around and looked at the True Dragon that was slowly regenerating its severed body.

"We both have something in common, Aris..." Aristoria said as she walked toward the True Dragon's Body. "And this is a perfect opportunity for you and for my child..." she revealed as she used the Dragon's Blood to devour the body of the True Dragon.

Aris didn't need to ask what Aristoria was planning to do. She knew that Aristoria had planned to use this chance to gift Rasmus something that he needed the most at that moment. Aristoria wanted to put the small essence of the True Dragon into Rasmus's body to stabilize his awakening. However, there was a question that she needed to know the answer to.

"Why? You could come back to life with that power..." Aris asked.

"I could, but what for?" Aristoria answered as she looked at Aris.

Aris tried to open her mouth before she could process the question. However, when there was a gap in her lips, she failed to find an answer. She could feel the emotions and the thoughts of Aristoria at that moment, and what she found and heard were nothing but peace.

"I can't let this one die. He's already losing more than half of his power, and that's why I managed to defeat him. If he disappears from existence completely, the world will force you to become the next heir to rule the world," Aristoria said as she stared at the True Dragon. "I'll make him weak enough to be stuck in this realm, and strong enough to exist," she added.

Aris didn't say a word and only watched Aristoria absorb the True Dragon's life force with the Dragon's blood.

"There are so many things that we can share, but the living shouldn't be staying in this realm for too long," Aristoria said as she absorbed the Dragon's Blood and walked toward Rasmus. "I have absorbed at least a tenth of the True Dragon's power. He will take half and you will take the other half," she said as she entered the barrier and placed her hand on Rasmus's chest.

"You know I don't want to become a True Dragon, so why are you giving it to me?" Aris asked with her brows furrowed.

"Because my child won't be able to handle a tenth of the True Dragon's power. If you don't take it, this realm soon will break by the True Dragon's remaining power and nothing can stop him. You can handle this power without affecting you a tiny bit. So what will you choose?" Aristoria asked as she walked toward Aris.

"I'm sorry that I dragged you into my selfishness..." Aristoria held Aris's hands tightly. "You're bearing the consequences of my actions. However, this power won't bind you, it can be used to help you keep

your freedom as Aris, not as an Aristoria. Take the poison so you can be immune by it in the future," she added, staring into Aris's eyes.

Aris sighed as she glanced at Rasmus and then back at Aristoria. She then slowly nodded in agreement.

Chapter 309 - 309: A Secret.

Rasmus slowly opened his eyes, and he saw walls of stones around him. He then looked at the ceiling and realized he was inside a cave. He didn't remember about being in a cave and thought that Aris might have brought him there to keep him safe.

"Welcome back..." Aris's voice could be heard from behind.

Rasmus turned around and saw Aris leaning against the wall. Her eyes were lazy like someone who was sleepy and trying to stay awake. She looked oddly exhausted, and wondered if the demons that came into the forest were powerful demons.

"Is it over?" Rasmus asked as he looked around, searching for the Crystallized Dragon's Breath that were in his hands before he got dragged into another realm.

"Yes, everything is over..." Aris nodded slowly. "And the Crystallized Dragon's Breath is in this ring..." She slowly lifted her left hand and showed the ring on her middle finger.

Rasmus was surprised that the spatial ring could contain the Crystallized Dragon's Breath. He remembered that Aris said the ring couldn't contain it back then, and yet the ring seemed to be fine with it inside.

"Did something happen?" Rasmus asked, knowing that something might have happened in the realm he was in.

"What did you remember when you were in that void realm?" Aris asked, her eyes stared into Rasmus's eyes.

"A presence of a True Dragon..." Rasmus muttered, leaning against the wall, his gaze distant. "I have never thought I would feel fear again..." he added.

Aris didn't want to admit it, but she also felt the same way when she witnessed how powerful a True Dragon was. She would die in that realm if she had to protect Rasmus. Luckily, Aristoria was there to protect him.

"I also met my late mother..." Rasmus said, his eyes stared blankly at the spot on the cave wall. "She said something about borrowing her power back... I assumed she took the power that she passed down to me," he continued.

"I met her as well..." Aris said softly.

Rasmus was curious about that since both his late mother and Aris were of the same essence. However, the way she revealed it, she seemed to not want to talk about it. He wondered what happened in the void realm, and why Aris seemed a bit different.

"You don't have to say anything, Aris. I'm not asking you to," Rasmus said as he looked at his surroundings.

Aris nodded and chose not to say anything. She then looked at Rasmus's legs with her eyes narrowed.

"Can you try to stand up?" Aris asked.

Rasmus raised his brows when Aris asked that question, but he decided to do as she said. When he folded his legs to stand up, he noticed something different. His legs were no longer stiff and numb, he could move his legs normally again.

Rasmus decided to walk around without using his cane. He was in disbelief that he could walk normally and his legs had regained their flexibility again.

"I can walk normally again," Rasmus said as he stretched his legs and then kicked the air a few times. "What does this mean?" He looked at Aris with his brows furrowed.

"It means you're ready for the next step..." Aris answered as she got up. "Are we in a hurry? If not, why don't we spend a week here?" She asked.

Rasmus never thought she would suggest he stay in the Spring Forest. He was convinced that something must have happened when he was unconscious.

"Yes, that's not a bad idea," Rasmus nodded in agreement. "I'm going to wash myself then," he said as he looked at the path in front of him.

Rasmus walked without having to use his cane anymore. It felt weird since he had been using the cane for months, and had gotten used to having something in his right hand.

Aris listened to Rasmus footsteps that were fading away. She then took a deep breath and pulled out the Crystallized Dragon's Breath from the spatial ring. She stared at it with a stoic expression, but her gaze was filled with thoughts.

(A few hours ago in the Void Realm)

"Can I ask you something?" Aris asked as she stared at Aristoria, sitting on her legs with Rasmus's head in her lap. "That Dragon's Blood, how did you obtain it?" She asked as she sat down in front of Aristoria.

"Because Sanya and I went to the Dragon's Maw. Have you gone there before?" Aristoria gently stroked Rasmus's silver hair, her soft gaze never leaving his face.

Aris was surprised when she heard of Dragon's Maw, a place that not even Elders dared to enter. She didn't expect her predecessor and Sanya, the two of them explored the forbidden place in the world.

"No, I haven't. Although I'm strong, I'm not confident that I can get out of that place alive..." Aris shook her head.

"Yes, and we both were unsure if we would come back alive as well back then. It was Sanya that suggested me to go to that place with her," Aristoria answered as she caressed Rasmus's cheek. "I wasn't interested in exploring that area until she mentioned something about the truth behind the disappearance of dragons," she pointed out, staring at Aris.

"What did you find there?" Aris asked with a curious look on her face.

Aristoria smiled as she shook her head, she didn't want Aris to know about what she found in Dragon's Maw.

"You don't want to know, Aris. At least not now because you're still too young to understand. Perhaps, if you follow Rasmus, everything will be unveiled," Aristoria answered as she cupped Rasmus's right cheek. "Or, if you meet Sanya again, you can ask her," she pointed out.

"Please, tell me," Aris said with a serious expression, not wanting to be left in the dark.

Aristoria looked at Aris and began to chuckle as she nodded with understanding.

"Well then, I'll tell you what we found in the Dragon's Maw," Aristoria said as she took a deep breath. "Do you know that thousands of years ago, there are hundreds of True Dragons?" She asked with her brows raised.

"What?" Aris's face turned pale when she heard that there were hundreds of True Dragons that roamed Neva. "How's that possible? There can't be more than one Aristoria, and to think there are hundreds of them, that doesn't make any sense..." She muttered.

"That's what Sanya and I thought as well, but it's the truth," Aristoria nodded as she stared at the True Dragon, who was lying on the ground unconscious. "Sanya and I found their bones, scattered around the Dragon's Maw. And what we found it shocking was the fact that they all died by something as if they were fighting a being that was powerful enough to overpower all of them," she continued as she glanced at Aris.

Aris was petrified by the revelation, and the fact that she was unaware of such an event. She wondered if the elders knew about it or not, and if they knew, her trust in her own race would be no longer there.

"The elders knew?" Aris asked, furrowing her brows.

"They knew, but they chose to keep a blind eye," Aristoria nodded. "It's not because they don't want everyone to know about the truth, but it's because there's no point of telling that truth," she added.

Aris sighed deeply, realizing there was something that was gnawing at the world. The situation was similar to what the humans of them were hiding the truth during the Great Era of Neva. Both the humans and Orthias were dealing with something similar, and she wondered if they were connected to each other in a way. She then realized why Sanya chose to make contact with humans, and that might be the reason.

"Did you find out what it was? The being that killed all the True Dragons?" Aris asked.

"No, not even the elders knew what it was. However, you might be able to find the answer," Aristoria shook her head, and then looked at the True Dragon. "He's the last survivor of the True Dragon, if you can tame him or devour his power, he will submit to you or to Rasmus," she suggested.

"So you're planning to feed him to me?" Aris arched her brows, not liking the idea of it.

"Since you don't want it, then let my child devour him," Aristoria answered as she looked down at Rasmus. "He inherited Dragon's Blood, and the reason he's here, born into this world is because of that thing. I lost all my power the moment I gave birth to him, but I don't regret it," she continued with a gentle smile on her face.

"If he devoured the Dragon's Breath, he would awaken his Dragon's Blood in his body. He will become stronger than both of us combined since the Dragon's Breath is the essence of a True Dragon," Aristoria said and looked at Aris. "But don't tell him all that. He needs to find it out on his own. Can you do that for me?" She asked.

Aris nodded with understanding, still deep in thought about everything that she found.

Chapter 310 - 310: Hot Spring.

Rasmus was bathing in a natural hot spring that spirits guided him to. He slowly regained his senses, and he could feel the heat and the relaxation he felt from it. Suddenly, he heard a rustling sound from behind him, and when he looked over his shoulder, he saw Aris's bare shoulders and realized she didn't have anything on her body.

Rasmus averted his gaze and continued to enjoy the scenery around the hot spring. However, Aris decided to join him and dipped herself in the hot spring. She didn't say a word, only staring at her own reflection in the water.

"It's nice in here..." Aris said as she looked at the scenery.

"Yes, it is..." Rasmus nodded. "Also, I have never asked this before, but you're not human. So, is there a reason why you have a body of human?" He asked as he looked at Aris, dipping her whole body into the hot spring, leaving only her neck and her head above the water.

"We, Orthias, adapt as time goes by. Before humans existed, we used to have a different appearance," Aris answered as she looked up at the morning sky. "We take the form of the current civilization to blend in," she explained as she looked at Rasmus.

"What's Orthias' true form look like?" Rasmus asked with his brows raised.

"Just light, white light like the stars in the night sky. It's blinding to mortals to look at us," Aris answered as she cupped the water and splashed it at the spirits that were eavesdropping on them.

"Is there a reason why you choose a female body?" Rasmus asked and watched the spirits giggle as they flew away into the woods.

"More flexible compared to male based on their body structures. It doesn't matter if it's a male or female body, but some of us have our own preference," Aris answered.

Rasmus responded with a hum and decided to stop asking questions. He let the silence come back as the mist thickened and gave both of them some privacy.

"Yur, come here..." Aris said with her eyes closed.

Rasmus heard a soft and quiet squeak from the woods. He still couldn't believe that Aris was fond of something to the point that she seemed to adore spirits.

Yur walked to the hot spring and floated above the water beside Aris, staring at her with a sulky face. Yur then decided to dip into the spring, leaving only the upper half of Yur's face on the surface.

Aris pulled Yur and hugged Yur tightly to her chest, treating Yur like a plush toy. Rasmus had to admit that Yur's body felt like a fluffy cloud that he could touch and feel.

"Yur, come with us," Aris said, her voice was commanding rather than a suggestion.

"Me? Where to?" Yur's squeaky voice and the way Yur pointed at its face as Yur looked up at Aris's face. "But... But I like it here, and what about those spirits? They might be in danger here if I'm not around," Yur frowned, worried and scared.

"You can't protect this forest the moment we both leave this place, Yur. You'll have nowhere to go by then," Aris answered as she looked down at Yur with a stoic expression. "You know that, too," she pointed out.

Yur whined as Yur looked down and played with its fingers. Yur was conflicted because Yur was a great spirit and had the responsibility for the well-being of the other spirits.

"There's a place that you and the other spirits can stay in, and it's near the Blackheart's territory," Rasmus said as he looked at Yur. "It's not only this forest. This whole continent might be in danger, nowhere is going to be safe here soon," he added.

Yur looked at Rasmus with bright and wide eyes. Yur wanted to free itself from Aris's grasp so Yur could approach Rasmus, however, Yur was powerless. Aris suddenly grabbed Yur's side and held it like a cat

toward Rasmus's face. Rasmus, on the other hand, didn't know what to do or say at that moment when Yur was staring at him with those eyes.

"You'll take us all?!" Yur asked in excitement while Yur's body was hanging on Aris's hand, Yur's legs were dangling above the water. "Really?" Yur's legs wiggled, kicking the air.

"Really?"

"Really?!"

"Really!"

"Really..."

The spirits suddenly surrounded the hot spring, and they were excited about the new place that Rasmus had mentioned. Yur immediately yelled at them and told them to leave since it would bother Rasmus and Aris. However, the spirits were ignoring Yur because they were always the mischievous little spirits.

"Leave, all of you," Aris said coldly.

All the spirits squeaked and immediately dispersed into the woods when they heard Aris's voice. Yur felt Aris's hands loosen up, and realized that Aris also wanted Yur to leave.

"I will talk with the other spirits about this..." Yur said, looking at Aris. "I will prepare something for him to eat as well!" Yur added and then fled from Aris's grasp, disappearing into the thick mist.

Aris sighed, finding it annoying to hear those mischievous little spirits. She had been living with those kinds ever since she was personified.

"Is there a reason why you want Yur to follow us?" Rasmus asked, making himself comfortable in the hot spring. "You don't seem to like those spirits, and yet you want Yur specifically," he looked at Aris with his brows raised.

"Yur is a great spirit that has lived for hundreds of years. Yur can be useful, for both of us, and since Yur is from Ure, it makes Yur special," Aris answered, closing her eyes and enjoying the silence. "Ure lineage is one of the oldest lineages, and to have Yur around, it will give you more influence, right?" She opened her eyes and glanced at Rasmus, knowing his plan already.

Rasmus had planned to bring Yur on his side from the beginning, and listening to Aris understand his intentions, it made him smile a bit. He then gave a nod as he cupped the water and splashed it on his face.

"What now?" Rasmus asked as he pulled his hair back and let the cold breeze hit his face and scalp.

"Now, I'm going to keep my eyes on you," Aris answered as she kept staring at Rasmus. "I'm going to thoroughly observe your body in the next few days. This is going to be the most crucial part of the process," she explained with a serious expression.

Aris suddenly got up and stood in front of Rasmus without any sense of embarrassment. Rasmus kept his eyes on her, and chose to remain silent. She then grabbed his hands and looked at his palms from up close. She squeezed his palms, and oddly enough, Rasmus felt his whole body react to every squeeze she did on his palm.

"This is better than I thought it would be," Aris muttered as she kept holding Rasmus's hands. "Your progression exceeds mine. I was the elders' proudest Aristoria because of my progress and my high affinity with our ancestors," she continued as she kept squeezing Rasmus's rough hands because of the healed scars that his Orthias healing ability found it not as defective or deformed.

"Why does it feel like it's not a good thing to have?" Rasmus asked as he stared into Aris's eyes.

Aris stopped squeezing Rasmus's hands, and the way he stared at him was similar to when he tried to dissect someone. She had never been in that position before, but at that moment, she realized how he could see things that she was hiding. She could lie, but she realized he would know that, and it would lose his trust in her.

"Because it's not..." Aris removed her hands from Rasmus's hands. "Your growth isn't something that you can be proud of. One little misstep, and you'll end up taking the path of becoming a True Dragon, and you can't undo that," she explained as she stared into Rasmus's eyes.

"Is that why you want to keep an eye on me? You're afraid?" Rasmus asked, his eyes never leaving Aris's.

"Yes, I'm afraid that I'm leading you toward a path where we both will go our separate ways. It would be fine if you're taking a path that won't be standing in my way, but if it did, I would have to kill you the moment I see the seed of it," Aris answered, staring back at Rasmus.

"That would be troublesome for both of us, having to deal with each other in the future," Rasmus said as he closed his eyes. "But my question will be, is your plan of steering my growth for your benefit and convenience?" He asked, slowly opening his eyes and staring at Aris.

"Yes," Aris answered truthfully, without showing any hesitation. "You said that we can use each other, right?" She asked, remembering the first conversation she had with Rasmus.

"Yes, we still are," Rasmus nodded.