

Evil 311

Chapter 311 - 311: Senses.

Rasmus stood under the waterfall with its strong current that would be enough to crush anyone. People were watching him in disbelief because even stone got crushed by it in less than a week. His body could withstand the strong pressure without using Aura, and he could barely feel any pain from it even though he had regained his senses.

What Rasmus was trying to achieve was to regain his ability to sense Mana. His sense to Mana became dull, and he couldn't sense anything even though it was around him based on what Aris said. He also couldn't manipulate Mana as if he had lost his ability to control it.

"It has been three days. How long are you going to stay here?" Aris asked as she watched Rasmus stand there like a statue.

"As long as it takes," Rasmus answered as he opened his eyes, and realized dozens of people were staring at him. "I just need that one moment. The moment I can grasp it, it will be enough," he added.

Aris stared at the gazes that were pointed at her and Rasmus. She released a subtle Aura and it was enough to give them goosebumps and fear. They all immediately looked away and began to walk away in a hurry.

"Let me check your spine..." Aris said as she walked into the waterfall and stood behind Rasmus.

Aris used her thumbs to press on Rasmus's lower spine with enough pressure that made his whole body stiff. He could feel something was moving inside his spine and bones. His bones and muscles were extremely sore and aching that he couldn't help but groan in discomfort.

"There's a blockage..." Aris pointed out as she kept pressing on Rasmus's lower spine. "I can unblock it, but I'm afraid that something else is also getting through," she added, tilting her head to look at Rasmus's face from behind.

"And what's that exactly?" Rasmus asked, looking at Aris from over his shoulder. "That path you mentioned back then?" He raised his brows, remembering Aris's concern where he could accidentally take the path to become a True Dragon.

Aris hummed and nodded as she removed her hands from Rasmus's back. She couldn't do much about Rasmus's condition, and it was the first time she felt completely powerless in her whole life.

"How's the situation in the forest?" Rasmus asked as he closed his eyes, trying to focus on his training again.

"Ever since the Crystallized Dragon's Breath cracked, it released quite a strong and unique Mana into the sky. The number of people that came into the forest increased, and demons had been keeping an eye on the forest," Aris answered, walking away from the waterfall. "I killed their Demon King rank demons, a lot of them. Nemu, the Fallen Watchers, would have sniffed the Dragon's Breath by now," she continued with her arms crossed.

Rasmus opened his eyes, and found the situation to be in his favor somehow. His gaze was blank, but Aris could see that he was deep in thought. He began to thread the plan while thinking about the possibilities of risks and consequences. He tried to find solutions and tried to think of preventions.

"Can you give me another two days? I need a moment of alone time, completely alone," Rasmus said with a serious expression.

Aris nodded with understanding and then created a barrier round the lake, making people unable to see Rasmus. She did it to protect Rasmus as well since she couldn't tell if one of the adventurers or travelers were people that were sent by Nemu or by the demonic cult to investigate the forest.

(At the same time in the Holy Nation)

"You noticed it too?" Serena asked Videl who was standing behind her, guarding her as her Paladin.

"Yes, the sky seems to be acting so strangely in the past few days. It's as if the sky is alive and terrified..." Videl answered as he turned around to look at the sky through the window. "The amount of Mana in the sky is oddly abundant," he muttered.

"Could it be the Fallen Watchers? Or could it be those two?" Serena asked, looking at Videl from over her shoulder.

"Who knows, but I'm assuming something will happen soon," Videl answered as he kept his eyes on the bright sky that seemed normal to others who weren't sensitive or unable to see Mana.

Suddenly someone knocked on the door, it was Daryus. Videl opened the door and saw Daryus standing at the door with Aurelia. He found them as a weird combination since Aurelia and Daryus never stood side by side.

"Doctor? Lady Saint?" Serena raised her brows as she stood up from her desk. "What do I owe the pleasure for you two to come to my chamber?" She asked as she walked toward the door.

"The Divine Physician is here, would you like to join us, Your Holiness?" Aurelia asked as she looked at Serena's gentle smile.

"He finally came? Of course, I would like to join you," Serena nodded and wrapped her arm around Aurelia's arm. "Shall we?" She smiled gently at Aurelia.

"Yes, Saint Serena," Aurelia smiled back at Serena.

Aurelia was glad that Serena stayed in the Holy Nation because she was someone that Rasmus recognized. It wasn't because she could rely on Serena, but it was because she knew there was someone behind her that would prevent her from getting pushed into the corner.

"So, Princess Asghar really kept her words. You must be so relieved, Doctor," Serena looked at Daryus who seemed so eager to meet the Divine Physician.

"Yes, I was anxious that Princess Asghar wouldn't keep her words," Daryus nodded. "Looks like Rasmus was right about her, and I was worried for nothing..." he added as he sighed in relief.

"Princess Asghar? What is she like?" Aurelia looked at Daryus and Serena.

Daryus scratched the back of his head, thinking of the right word to describe Anastasha.

"Princess Asghar is similar to Rasmus. She's not someone you want to be sitting at the table with," Daryus answered. "She's dangerous and not someone you can have a normal and casual conversation with," he added.

Aurelia heard about the announcement that Anastasha did, and the fact Rasmus was there beside her made it even worse. She didn't know which was more concerning when Rasmus recognized Anastasha or the other way around.

When they walked out of the palace, they saw a carriage enter the gate into the first layer of the Holy Nation. The carriage had an emblem on it, a symbol of a black snake circling around the golden egg.

"The symbol of the Asghar family..." Daryus said, his eyes showed a sign of anxiety and fear when he saw that symbol. "To think that she uses her family's power to bring the Divine Physician, that means she has chosen to threaten her siblings and those who support them..." he pointed out with his eyes narrowed.

"And she showed how she could gain access and influence to the Holy Nation by bringing the carriage here. How smart is she, making her influential in both South Neva and Central Neva," Serena chuckled as she watched the carriage coming to the palace.

Aurelia heard enough that she was convinced that Anastasha was indeed similar to Rasmus. She knew that one day she would come to see her, and she didn't know if she was ready to meet someone like her that would affect her and the Holy Nation in the future.

When the carriage arrived, the coachman opened the carriage door. Aurelia and the others looked at the man that was sitting inside with a cloak and a hood that covered his face. They were curious about the legendary Divine Physician Sima, who could cure and heal any wounds.

Sima slowly got up and walked out of the carriage, still hiding his face. When he stood in front of them, he slowly pulled his hood and revealed his face. Everyone was surprised to see a young handsome man with neat long black hair, fair skin, and yellow eyes.

"Greetings, to the Saints..." Sima's soft and soothing voice matched his appearance. He bowed down to respect the prominent figures. "However, I'm here to help Her Holiness, and I don't want to waste my time even if I'm sounding rude to you," he said as he looked at Aurelia and Serena.

"Yes, we understand, please come with us, Divine Physician Sima," Aurelia nodded with understanding, and then pointed her hand at the palace.

Videl and Serena kept staring at Sima because his appearance seemed a bit off. However, they didn't feel or sense any demonic energy from him. They didn't want to mess up Rasmus's plan, and they made sure nobody could bypass them and ruin his plan.

"Let's keep an eye on him," Videl said as he kept staring at Sima entering the palace with Aurelia and Daryus.

"Yes, I'm planning to do so even without you telling me to," Serena answered coldly and followed them.

Chapter 312 - 312: Sima, the Divine Physician.

Sima entered Astrea's chamber and saw Astrea's body that was covered in bandages. He could see the dried blood on the bandages, and he could feel the pain from just seeing her. He then lowered his head at her, showing respect to the woman who saved millions of lives in South Neva.

"I thought a Divine Physician to be an old man. I'm surprised that the man who could cure and heal any wounds and diseases is a young man," Astrea said while she fixed her seating on her bed.

"I might look young, Your Holiness, but I'm already 117 years old. I'm aging, but very slowly," Sima answered as he walked into the room with Aurelia's permission.

Daryus and the others' eyes widened when they heard how old Sima was. It was terrifying to think that a handsome man was more than a hundred years old.

"So you know the secret of attaining eternal youth. I wonder what it cost you," Astrea asked as she watched Sima approach her.

"It cost me nothing," Sima smiled at Astrea. "If I may, Your Holiness?" He asked as he pointed his hand at her left arm which was covered in bandages.

Astrea found Sima's answer to be oddly suspicious and interesting at the same time. She then nodded and offered her left arm to him so he could check on the wounds that hadn't healed in the slightest for the past months.

Sima carefully peeled the bandages off Astrea's arm because he knew how painful it would be. When Serena, Daryus, and Aurelia saw the open wounds that revealed her flesh, veins, and even bones, Daryus and Aurelia couldn't help but flinch. They would never get used to them, no matter how many times they had seen them.

Sima didn't show any reaction and immediately pulled out a small stick made of pure silver from under his cloak. He carefully put the tip into the wound and slowly lifted the skin to check the severity of the wound. The sound of wet and sticky flesh combined with the view of flesh and skin being separated made Aurelia's knees weak.

"Hmm..." Sima slowly pulled the stick from the wound. "This is similar to what I saw decades ago. A dying body, but the difference is this body isn't decaying," he muttered as he looked at how red and healthy the flesh was.

"This isn't an illness, Divine Physician. This is the result of a human body trying to endure something beyond human capability and logic," Astrea said with a soft smile at Sima.

"Yes, it appears so," Sima nodded in agreement since he had never seen anything like this before. "Can you prepare hot water? I want to try something," he looked at Daryus.

Daryus nodded and hurriedly left the chamber to bring hot water. Sima was standing beside Astrea and observed her condition, finding it interesting. Serena and Videl kept staring at him, trying to dissect the person behind that eternal youth and handsome face.

Daryus came back with a bowl of hot water and put it on the bedside table. Sima pulled out his medical instruments and put them on the bedside table. All of them were made of pure silver and gold.

Sima dipped the tip of the needle into the hot water and let it sit there for a minute. Once it was sterilized, he looked at the tip and then carefully stabbed it into the back of Astrea's hand. He then pulled it out, watching the blood drip down.

Everyone wondered what Sima was trying to do by pricking Astrea's hand with a needle. When Sima wiped the blood and tried to squeeze more out, the wound had closed, and no more blood was coming out of it.

"This is interesting. The wound I made has already healed. However, the way wounds that you have from the war, it's as if the body refuses to heal them," Sima explained as he cleaned the needle and with a piece of cloth.

Nobody questioned Sima's words because he had shown them the proof of his words. Daryus and Aurelia were shocked, but then Aurelia stared into Astrea's eyes, knowing exactly what it was.

"It's called a stigma, it can be a sign of disgrace or a blessing," Aurelia pointed out as she kept staring into Astrea's eyes.

"A stigma?" Sima hummed as he nodded with understanding. "I have heard people claiming to have such a thing, believing they were chosen by the Gods. But it was always revealed they were making that up to gain attention. However, now that I'm seeing it myself, I would be blind and ignorant to dismiss this," he said as he crossed his arms, thinking of what he had just witnessed.

It was as Sima said, they heard a lot about people claiming to have a stigma. However, there wasn't a single case where it was the real thing that made the stigma itself questionable.

"So..." Daryus broke the silence. "Can you cure her?" He asked Sima.

"Nothing is as simple as yes or no. I'm just a human, not a powerful being. I can't guarantee that I can cure Her Holiness's condition, but I'll try my best," Sima answered as he looked at his tools, thinking about which was the best method to dissect Astrea's condition that could lead him to an answer that he was looking for.

Everyone watched every move of Sima's eyes when he was observing Astrea's body and his tools. They could see it in his eyes that there was nothing malicious or suspicious about his gaze. They knew how much he was interested in her condition and wanted to solve the mystery.

"This might take a while to solve because I need to learn how is this possible," Sima said with a serious expression, rubbing his chin slowly. "There are a few methods that I can use, but I don't want to take a leap blindly without knowing what I'm doing. Although I can't guarantee her to cure her condition, I have to be make sure nothing will harm her with what I'm doing," he continued as he crossed his arms.

"What do you have in mind, Divine Physician?" Astrea asked, interested in Sima's personality and way of thinking. She could tell that he was a wise man and someone who upheld integrity.

"I might need to grab a few ingredients to make potions and see how your body reacts to it, Your Holiness. I don't treat anyone lightly, not even a simple cough," Sima answered as he pulled out a paper and began to write something on it. "Doctor Daryus, I need you to find these ingredients..." he said as he passed the paper to Daryus.

Daryus looked at the ingredients, and he had never heard of any of the plants or herbs on the list that were used as medicine. He realized that his knowledge of medicine was still lacking, not even the tip of the iceberg compared to Sima's.

"I'll see what I can do," Daryus nodded with understanding and hurriedly walked toward the door.

"No need to rush. We are not in a hurry since Her Holiness's condition is stable. This isn't a threatening condition," Sima said as he watched Daryus walk at a fast pace.

Daryus turned around and was surprised at how laid-back Sima was, and yet he realized that Sima wasn't wrong. He never thought that a doctor or a physician would be so calm and collected, and somehow it reminded him of Rasmus who was always calm and collected in every situation.

"(I guess some people are amazing...)" Daryus thought as he left the chamber.

"You remind me of someone, wise and calm. However, he's quite the opposite. He's bold and confident, believing that everything would go down to his plan, and he did exactly that. You're more humble," Astrea said as she looked at Sima, who was busy checking his tools and making sure everything was sterile.

"Sounds like he was quite lucky, or perhaps he knew what he was doing. There's nothing in between that," Sima responded in a soft mutter as he held a scalpel. He didn't seem to be interested in the conversation, keeping his mind focused on the problem in front of him.

"Yes, he's a dangerous man. The same man that could convince Princess Asghar to bring you here," Astrea nodded in agreement.

The moment Anastasha's name was mentioned, he stopped checking his scalpel. He then looked at Astrea with a curious look.

"Whoever that man is, he's not someone you want to be around with, Your Holiness. Whoever associates with Princess Asghar, they're dangerous people," Sima said, and then continued checking his tools.

Aurelia and Serena didn't show any expression when Sima said that Rasmus was a dangerous person. They were quite surprised that he could hit the spot about Rasmus from that information alone.

"And yet here you are, Divine Physician. Are you not associated with Princess Asghar? If you're not, I believe you won't be here right now," Astrea raised her brows, staring at Sima.

Sima responded with a soft smile, not denying or admitting Astrea's provocation.

At that moment, the three of them realized that Sima was oddly similar to Rasmus. Both of them were dangerous in their own way, and both of them were mysterious, making it even harder to dissect Sima and his background.

Chapter 313 - 313: Mana.

Rasmus opened his eyes and saw nothing but water splashing around him. He had been under the waterfall for the past two days. He had been enduring the fierce waterfall nonstop that he could no longer feel anything on his head and upper body.

People were still around Spring Lake, enjoying the scenery with their families and friends. They didn't know that there was someone under the waterfall because of the barrier that Aris made.

"Hey... isn't that the same guy we saw a few days ago?" A man asked as he pointed at Rasmus swimming to the side of the lake.

"That white hair guy? He's been staying under the waterfall this whole time?" The friend raised his brows in disbelief. "That guy is crazy..." he muttered.

"You don't know who that man is?" A man approached the two friends who were talking about Rasmus. "He's Rasmus Blackheart. The man who defeated the demon army in South Neva," he revealed as he crossed his arms and watched Rasmus rest on the side of the lake.

It didn't take long until people began to shift their focus to Rasmus. They observed his toned, lean, and muscular body, which looked different from that of the average man. They were used to seeing bulky and muscular men, like knights who had trained their bodies. They had never seen a lean, toned, and muscular body before, and it looked more intimidating than the bulky ones.

Rasmus looked at his upper body in the water's reflection. His dense and tight muscles were clearly visible even though he wasn't under any shade. He realized the result of enduring the waterfall for almost a week would make his body drastically change. His bloodline as Orthias also made his muscles grow lean and dense rather than swollen.

Rasmus noticed the gazes that were pointed at him, especially the women who had a different type of gaze. He then decided to get out of the lake and show off his toned abs and rib muscles. He wasn't bothered by the gazes, and he even stared them back, observing them and trying to find someone who had malicious intent. However, he was distracted by something that he had never seen before.

"Hmm?" Rasmus furrowed his brows and saw a glimpse of faint blue mist that just flew around the crowd.

Rasmus saw that faint blue mist moving around the crowd again. He tried to focus on that mist, and the more he looked at it, the more of them appeared around the crowd. He was confused and curious about that mist, especially when the mist seemed to be moving so fluidly like water.

When Rasmus was observing the mist, suddenly the mist thickened and began to move toward him. He became wary of it, so he slowly took a few steps back as he kept observing the mist. However, his back hit something, and the mist suddenly went past him, giving a familiar yet unfamiliar scent.

Rasmus turned around and saw Aris standing behind him, staring at him with a stoic expression. His gaze was so focused on the liquid mist that lingered around Aris, and how the mist acted like invisible armor to her body.

"You can finally see it?" Aris asked, tilting her head.

"Finally?" Rasmus narrowed his eyes, staring at Aris. "Is this Mana?" He asked as he looked at more liquid mist orbiting around her.

Aris looked around her, where the Mana orbited around her. She slowly lifted her left hand and flicked her index finger, making the Mana gather around her left hand. She then showed how the Mana turned orange with a mirage until it suddenly became fire.

"This is how you invoked fire from Mana, you did it like this," Aris said as she dispersed the fire, turning it back into Mana.

Rasmus was fascinated by how Mana turned into a mirage and then became fire. Since he had never seen the color of the elements in his previous life, it took his breath away. It was no wonder that Lenin was interested in him since she was a Great Sage who could feel, smell, and see Mana.

"When I saw it for the first time, I realized you were indeed an Orthias, just like me. Your understanding of the world is on par, or even better than me. I suppose your intelligence came from your late mother," Aris said as she watched Mana linger around her body like snakes showing affection.

Rasmus couldn't tell Aris that his knowledge was from Earth. However, it was fortunate that Aris believed that his knowledge came from his lineage as Orthias. He could use that to erase suspicions from those who questioned his intelligence and knowledge about the world.

"Now, why don't you give it a try?" Aris asked. "Since you can see Mana now, it means you have also regained your ability to use it again," she pointed out as she sent the Mana to Rasmus's body.

Rasmus watched the Mana linger around his naked torso. It felt more vivid compared to before when he couldn't see Mana. He could feel the comforting coldness of the Mana, and how it felt like both air and gel at the same time.

"Not here, too many eyes..." Rasmus said as he walked past Aris and went into the woods.

Aris gave a cold gaze at the crowd, and the Mana turned translucent. The Mana lingered around the crowd and how the Mana sipped into their bodies and affected them deeply. The crowd felt fear and decided to look away with trembling hands. She then followed Rasmus into the woods.

As Rasmus walked into the woods, the more he became sensitive in sensing Mana. His eyes began to see more of them as if the curtains had been opened up even wider. He noticed how the Mana began to react to his presence, slowly moving toward him as if they wanted to embrace him.

Rasmus closed his eyes as he walked, and he made himself vulnerable. The Mana began to sip through his skin, entering his body and letting the Mana make itself at home. He could feel every fiber and every cell in his body was being enhanced and strengthened.

"You have grown taller again," Aris said as she walked behind Rasmus, watching everything that had just happened. She noticed that Rasmus's head was right under her chin, but now it was above her lips.

"Did I?" Rasmus looked at Aris from over his shoulder and realized that his eye level was at her lips. "It's hard to keep up with the growth," he said as he pulled his hair back and let the Mana within his body produce heat, vaporizing the water on his wet body.

"You might become taller than me in the future," Aris said as she walked beside Rasmus. "Looks like you have regained your ability to manipulate Mana," she said, looking at the vaporized water around Rasmus.

"It appears so, but I need to sharpen my senses and control again. It has been a while since I invoked magic," Rasmus responded as he glanced at the ring on Aris's finger. "I'll take the ring back," he said as he opened his hand to Aris's hand.

Aris looked at the ring for a moment before she pulled it off and put the ring in Rasmus's hand.

"Why? Do you want one?" Rasmus asked as he stared at Aris.

"No, I just don't want you to hold the Crystallized Dragon's Breath," Aris shook her head. "That thing is inside your ring, and I don't want you to pull it out randomly out of curiosity," she continued.

"I won't," Rasmus shook his head as he put the ring on. He watched as the spatial ring absorbed the Mana from his hand like a stream of water. He was quite surprised to see that it worked that way. "I won't touch it because I know how dangerous it is," he said as he pulled out his shirt from the spatial ring and put it on.

Aris nodded, and then she stopped walking as she looked around the trees.

"We are far enough, right? Why don't you try to test your progress?" Aris asked as she crossed her arms, staring at Rasmus.

Rasmus turned around and looked around him, realizing that they had been walking for a while. He then nodded in agreement and slowly took a deep breath as he sensed and smelled Mana around him. The more he smelled it, the less he recognized the scent, even though it was familiar to him.

When Rasmus opened his eyes, he was surprised by how abundant the Mana was around him. The forest was covered in a thin layer of mist of Mana, flowing so fluidly as if they were waiting to be used. He slowly raised his right hand to his face level, staring at the Mana in front of him.

Rasmus manipulated the Mana, turning its color to a light green, and shaped them into a ball. Since he could see the Mana, he didn't need to visualize or guess anymore. He could see that when the ball was struggling to contain the Mana, it kept absorbing.

As the ball of Mana absorbed almost every particle of the Mana in the wood, Rasmus simply flinched his eyes. The Mana ball exploded, releasing a massive shockwave, cutting down hundreds of trees in a split second. He then watched as the Mana dispersed slowly, but he chose to reuse it again, igniting them.

Aris watched as massive pillars of flame appeared all around her almost simultaneously. She then watched at how Rasmus controlled the flame pillars, forcing them to move closer until they were all combined into a giant flame tornado. The toppled trees were burned into ashes in a matter of seconds. He fed the flame tornado with both pure oxygen and hydrogen, making the flame unstable.

Rasmus pointed his right hand at the flame tornado and clenched his fist tightly. The flame tornado suddenly grew wider and exploded. The flame wave hit Aris, and she could feel the burning heat on her skin, forcing her to coat her body with Aura to protect her. If a normal human were hit by the heatwave, their skin and flesh would melt.

Rasmus noticed that Aris had layered her body with a thin translucent sliver of mist around her body.

"Sorry, I was testing something," Rasmus said.

"No," Aris shook her head. "I should have known that your ability in magic is extraordinary," she continued, realizing how terrifying Rasmus's ability in magic was, and how he barely did anything to produce such destructive power so easily.

"How is it?" Aris asked with her brows raised.

"It's convenient now, and I don't see any limitation on my end," Rasmus answered as he looked at his hands.

"That's good, but what about your body?" Aris asked as she tilted her head. "Want to spar?" She smirked.

Rasmus stared at Aris for a moment before he pulled out his sword and Aris's sword from the spatial ring. He then tossed her sword at her as he readied his stance.

"We have an open space now, why not?" Rasmus smiled.

Chapter 314 - 314: Growth.

Aris blocked Rasmus's attack, and it was enough to push her a bit. She was shocked and excited at the same time when Rasmus slowly caught up to her. She had been waiting for this moment, to have a proper opponent to spar with ever since she lost Illidan.

She coated her greatsword with Aura and let the Mana sip into the blade. Both Mana and Aura coexisted on her blade, creating a stream of silver with blue-ish hue color around it.

Rasmus knew how intimidating it was to see Aris in her battle stance even before he could see Mana. Since he could see Mana, that only made it worse because he could see the immense pressure and energy that she released.

"So this is how you look through those demons' lense..." Rasmus stared at Aris with the immense flow of Aura around her body, oozing a mirage that went a few meters high above her head. "I would call myself foolish to fight someone like you," he scoffed as he readied his stance, watching as more Aura looming over Aris's body that made her like a walking catastrophe.

"I'm not even fully using my power yet," Aris said, and then dashed toward Rasmus with her greatsword ready to cut him.

Rasmus gathered Mana and turned it into Aura around his sword, legs, shoulders, and arms. With how visible Aris's Aura was, it made him easier to scale and to anticipate how much Aura he needed to withstand her.

The moment their swords clashed, Rasmus was baffled by Aris's power. He was confident that if he blocked that attack before he was awakened, his arms would fall off immediately. He realized he was deceived by the Aura around her and it made him forget that Aris's pure strength was already inhuman. He immediately turned the Mana within his body into Aura and used the remaining Mana to jolt his muscles with electricity.

That burst of power was enough to push Aris away once again. Aris was surprised, and she was still confused and curious about Rasmus's ability that made his body produce such overwhelming power. She didn't understand the process behind it, and she still couldn't grasp it. Although she was stronger, with Rasmus's ability to manipulate his body with his knowledge, he became a dangerous threat.

The moment Rasmus produced sparks of lightning around his body, Aris knew that she had to take the spar more seriously. At that moment, Rasmus's movements became fluid and swift that normal eyes couldn't keep up. Aris was being tested on her endurance and reflexes because Rasmus appeared and disappeared constantly and gradually increased the pace. She began to turn her smile into a grin as she blocked all of Rasmus's attacks effortlessly.

Rasmus knew that it wouldn't be enough, he increased the voltage within his body and at the same time absorbed more Mana into his body, turning it into heat. His body warmed up, his heartbeat went beyond two hundred beats per minute. He began to see things in enhanced color as if the contrast in his vision was being raised and how he could see his vision pulsing that matched his heartbeat.

With every attack that Rasmus threw at Aris, it gradually became more destructive and powerful. Aris was excited and a bit nervous at the same time because she didn't know how far Rasmus could grow stronger anymore. She had seen hundreds of Orthias, and she knew everyone's limits, however, he couldn't see Rasmus's.

Rasmus's body was fine even after he basically destroyed his organs and tearing his muscles. He realized that he was no longer a human because his body could withstand the extreme heat and electricity within his body. However, he began to feel the numbness in his hands crippling toward his arms. He knew that there was a limit, but he wondered where he should draw the line, where he should stop breaking the limit.

Aris watched as the sparks of lightning around Rasmus intensified and how his body began to release hot steam. She had been blocking almost a hundred attacks that Rasmus had thrown at her in the past few minutes. Her right hand began to shake because of the intensity of Rasmus's attacks. She then decided to use more of her power to show the gap between her and Rasmus.

Rasmus realized how Aris began to challenge him, provoking him into silence. There were no words that came out of their mouths because their actions spoke volumes of what they wanted to do. He accepted the challenge and decided to do one last trick he had in mind, the final push that might put his body at risk.

Rasmus distanced himself to take a breath as he readied his stance. His gaze was at Aris's eyes, telling her that the next move would be his final move. Aris smirked as she readied her stance and held her sword with both hands for the first time.

Rasmus closed his eyes as he took a deep breath, maintaining the chaos within his body. The electricity that kept tensing his muscles and nerves, and the heat that kept his blood flow and heart moving rapidly. If he was still a human, his internal organs would have failed a long time ago and he would have become something that was worse than death itself.

Rasmus readied his stance as he absorbed a significant amount of Mana into his body. Aris watched as the Mana flowed from all directions toward Rasmus's body. She didn't know what he was trying to do, and that made her nervous, putting her on the edge as she tightened her grip on her sword.

Rasmus could feel the Mana within his body was slowly being devoured by the electricity and the heat, turning it into fuel. However, Rasmus tried to not let the Mana become the fuel for those two, he wanted to make the Mana into a different form of fuel, and it was Oxygen.

The moment the Mana turned into Oxygen inside his body, every muscle and nerve swole. The veins on his hands, neck, and face popped out. He could feel the intensity within his body, and he couldn't maintain it for another few seconds. He then tightened his grip on his sword, cracking the handle.

Aris was baffled by the sudden change on Rasmus's body and how the Aura he released was on par with hers, or even way more than hers. When she was about to enhance her body, Rasmus suddenly disappeared into thin air and reappeared right above her. She couldn't see his movement at all, and her body immediately reacted to block the attack.

As soon as Rasmus swung his sword down at Aris with all his might, the gravitational pressure brought Aris down to her knee. She felt a sting on her fingers when she blocked the attack that slowly turned into pain. The shockwave was enough to turn the whole field into a massive crater. That clash was enough to make the whole forest tremble.

Aris couldn't push Rasmus away with that intense final blow. She gritted her teeth as she tried to push Rasmus away, and it felt like she was trying to push a mountain. She was about to release her full power as her eyes began to glow bright blue, but then, to her surprise, Rasmus collapsed onto her body. She immediately caught his boiling hot body and threw her sword and Rasmus's sword away.

Aris slowly sat down and carefully put Rasmus down as she tried to lower his body temperature. She carefully stabilized Rasmus's condition as she healed his body with her power. She sighed in relief when she found out that Rasmus was fine and that he had collapsed because of exhaustion.

"I was so close from using my full power," Aris said as she looked at Rasmus, who was unconscious. "Whatever you did back there, that hurts my hands..." She looked at her hands that were still shaking from the clashes.

Yur floated toward them and landed right beside Aris, looking at the mess and the damage that they both did during the spar. Yur watched everything halfway, and it was terrifying because the amount of Mana that was released was enough to make every animal run out of fear. The people that were in the forest also felt the intensity that they felt sick and some even fainted out of the blue.

"I had to protect the area when you two were sparring. I'm glad that I came at the right time, or the forest would get completely destroyed," Yur said, looking at Aris staring at her hands. "It was scary..." Yur muttered, staring at Rasmus.

"It was," Aris nodded in agreement. "I didn't expect that he could push me this far," she continued as she stood up and looked at the chaos they both had created as she collected her sword and Rasmus's swords.

"I'll bring him to the cave. You deal with this," Aris said as she carried Rasmus in her arms.

"Okay..." Yur pouted when Yur realized Aris had threw all the mess at Yur to fix.

Chapter 315 - 315: Dream.

Rasmus groaned as he slowly opened his eyes and found himself in the cave. He felt like he had deja Vu because he woke up in the same cave and the same spot. He slowly sat up, but then he felt immense pain all over his body. The cramps made his body stiff and was squeezed at the same time.

"Now I know the limit..." Rasmus groaned as he leaned against the wall.

"You woke up already?" Yur asked, walking toward Rasmus with cod-like fish that had been grilled. The fish looked so big in Yur's hands, and how Yur had to use both hands to hold the fish. "I brought you food to eat..." Yur said, offering the fish to Rasmus. The way Yur looked up and offered the fish, it made Yur look like an innocent child with those big eyes.

Rasmus looked at Yur who looked so small in front of him for a moment before he took the grilled fish from Yur's hands. He took a bite on the grilled fish, and to his surprise, the fish was well-seasoned and the meat was so juicy.

"Thank you, Yur," Rasmus nodded his head. "You know how to cook? I noticed that every food that you made for me, they were all delicious," he asked and took another bite of the fish.

"I watched humans fish and how they grill them. I know how to make human food, and I'm confidence with my skill," Yur put a smug look on the face as Yur rested its hands on its waist. "I'm amazing, right?" Yur giggled mischievously, boasting itself to Rasmus.

"Yes, you are amazing, Yur," Rasmus smiled as he nodded.

Yur giggled cutely with its hands behind its back, swaying its waist side to side. Rasmus chuckled softly as he continued eating the grilled fish, finding it bizarre that a cute child was actually a dangerous great spirit.

Rasmus ate the fish quietly until there was nothing left but the bones. Yur watched him eat, and the way Yur stared at him, it looked like a child with questions written all over their faces as if they were observing him like an alien.

"It has been a week since Aris and I came here," Rasmus said as he massaged his left hand. "Have you thought about joining us?" He asked, looking at Yur.

Yur's expression saddened when Rasmus brought up the topic, and it was enough to tell that Yur was reluctant to leave the forest. However, Yur wasn't naive or foolish like humans, Yur knew that leaving was the only right choice. The spirits would be hunted by demons, and they would die and would be unable to be reborn into the world.

"We will join you since you promised us a place to live in. However, what makes you think the place that we are going to live in won't end up like this forest?" Yur asked, staring into Rasmus's eyes.

"I don't know, but at least all of you will be near me and Aris. If something happened, it would be easy for us to help you and your kin," Rasmus answered as he rubbed his palm. "I also don't understand why I believe the place that we are going to visit is safer than here. I can't remember that place, and yet I feel like it will be a safe place for you," he continued, thinking about the memory of the past when his father brought him to his father's favorite place.

Yur tilted its head, staring at the distance in Rasmus's gaze. Yur had been living long enough to understand human feelings and emotions. However, Yur still couldn't believe that the person in front of Yur was both Human and Orthias, or neither Human nor an Orthias.

"Is that place special to you, Rasmus?" Yur asked, tilting its head to the other side.

"Not mine, but my late father's favorite place. It was a forest, a beautiful one with a lake. I don't know where it is, but I believe you might be able to help me find that place," Rasmus answered and looked at Yur.

Yur found that place to be as sacred as the Spring Forest based on Rasmus's description. Yur knew enough about Rasmus's lineage, and how much the Blackheart family contributed in getting rid of evil in Central Neva. Yur had seen Rasmus's late father enter the Spring Forest before, and found him to be an interesting human.

"Your late mother was an Aristoria, and if your father found that place to be his favorite, that could mean that there were spirits there as well," Yur pointed out, crossing its arms. "Since the Refenus kingdom was on the southeast of Central Neva, and the spirits that came to this forest weren't coming from the southeast, I believe there's a place where spirits live there," Yur continued, furrowing its brows.

Rasmus found Yur's deduction skill to be amazing, and it caught him off guard because of Yur's appearance. He thought about what Yur said, and he found Yur's words to be worth remembering and to be considered.

"Yes, you might be right," Rasmus nodded in agreement. "However, where is Aris?" He asked with his brows raised.

"Lady Aris is looking for the purest Mana stone in this forest. She's going to place us, the spirits into the Mana stone as our temporary place to live," Yur answered, sitting down beside Rasmus. Yur's tiny figure and how Yur spread its legs open like a child was oddly adorable. "Lady Aris will use her power to make a perfect vessel for us to reside in. She knew that it would be bad and dangerous for us if a big group of spirits came out of the forest," Yur dangled its feet back and forth.

Rasmus hummed and nodded with understanding, finding Aris's initiative to help the spirits baffling. He had never seen Aris do something for others except for him, and that was because he asked her to. He wondered why Aris adored Yur from the moment she saw Yur.

"You should get some rest, Rasmus..." Yur said, standing up on its own feet. "Lady Aris said that I shouldn't bother with your resting and recovery time since we will be leaving as soon as Lady Aris made the vessel for us," Yur added, taking the fishbone.

Rasmus watched Yur walk away with the fishbones in its hands. The sound of tiny barefoot hitting the ground echoing was somehow comforting to his ear. He then decided to close his eyes again and let his body rest since he still couldn't feel his legs and back.

Dreams could be said to be the apparition of the desire of the subconscious. It was what happened to Rasmus when he tried to remember the place of his father's favorite place of solitude.

"Do you like it here?" Erglade approached Rasmus and stood behind him, staring at the lake.

"Yes, this place is beautiful, father. But..." Rasmus paused to turn around to look at his father. "Why is this place so far away from our home? Can't we move here instead?" He asked.

"Because it will only taint the beauty of nature. Humans tend to destroy, reshape, and throw away things that aren't useful for them," Erglade answered as he sat down with his black cape blown gently by the breeze. "If we move here, we will ruin the beauty of this place," he patted Rasmus's head.

Rasmus nodded with understanding, and then decided to enjoy the quiet morning. He watched as the thin mist lingered on top of the lake with swans swimming on the lake. He realized it was his first time going outside the mansion, and to spend alone time with his father.

"You see that small island in the middle of the lake?" Erglade asked as he pointed at the small island with a giant dead tree on it. "That place is my favorite place. Once you're old enough to swim the lake or capable of flying, go there and you'll feel how peaceful that place is," he said as he stared at the island with lazy eyes.

Rasmus looked at the island, scared to even dip himself into the lake. He didn't dare to swim because the lake was very deep and had giant fish inside. He then looked at the giant monkey pod trees that surrounded the lake. He also saw a mountain in the far distance where the peak was blocked by the clouds.

When Rasmus was about to open his mouth, he was awakened from his dream. He opened his eyes and saw Aris sitting beside him, staring at him with her brows raised.

"Did I wake you up? You seem a bit disappointed," Aris said as she tilted her head.

"No..." Rasmus said under his breath as he sat up. "I think I know where we have to go now," he continued.

"That's perfect because I'm also ready to go," Aris said as she pulled out a glowing bright blue gemstone from her pocket. "The spirits are inside here, and Yur is waiting for us outside," she pointed out.

Rasmus nodded with understanding as he stretched his arms. He felt a lot better, even though his insides were still sore.

"Let's leave," Rasmus said as he slowly got up. "I guess I'll keep using this," he pulled out the cane from the spatial ring. "It's a nice thing to have, and it's a waste not to use it. It can deceive those who are following us too, giving them false information," he added.

Aris nodded and watched Rasmus hold the cane and use it to help him walk. She then walked beside him, leaving the cave and the forest with him and Yur.

Chapter 316 - 316: Human in its nature.

Rasmus rode his horse in silence, his eyes never stopped looking around him. Ever since he reached halfway through his awakening, he had been smelling a lot of things that his nose couldn't perceive before. The smell of the soil and grass that he used to ignore, now he could distinguish from dried grass to healthy grass, dried soil to fertile soil.

Rasmus's eyes that could only see things in details that were a few meters away from him, now he could see things a dozen meters away in detail. He could see the ants on the ground a dozen meters away from him. He could see the legs, the hair, and the eyes of an ant that were around him. His eyes acted differently where he could zoom in and out like a camera as he pleased.

Rasmus's hearing got enhanced as well, to the point where he could listen to constant loud murmurs when he noticed there were people not far from him. He could hear sharply, knowing what they were talking about. It slightly bothered him until Aris taught him how to filter the sound out like valves. He imagined his ears like valves, where he could adjust his hearing sensitivity.

Rasmus learned that all those enhanced senses could be adjusted. He could stop hearing, seeing, and smelling things if he wanted to, to the point where he could lose all his senses like turning them off. He never thought that a body could be adjusted like a machine that way, and it made him think how far he could adjust and modify his body once he was fully awakened.

Rasmus and Aris rode their horses into the woods in the middle of the night. They didn't need to rest because Rasmus didn't feel fatigue anymore. They only stopped for enjoying the scenery and the foods, which was what Aris wanted to do.

When they were enjoying the silence, an orange and white screech owl landed on Aris's shoulder. The owl looked so fluffy with its yellow eyes and wide black pupils, staring and tilting its head at the path in front of it.

"They're following us, Yur?" Rasmus asked, staring at the owl.

"Yes, they're still following us ever since we left the forest..." Yur answered, nodding its fluffy head. "They're not far from us, but they're not trying to catch up on us either. Also, it seems their number is increasing," Yur added.

"I over heard their conversation earlier, and it seems two of them noticed the changes in Mana capacity in the forest. It seems they're capable of sensing Mana, maybe experts?" Yur tilted its head like an owl, almost ninety degrees.

"They're demons, powerful ones," Aris answered with a stoic expression.

"Eek!" Yur immediately used its fluffy wings to cover its face. Its fluffy owl body was trembling in fear that Aris could feel it on her shoulder. "You should have told me that there are demons among them, Lady Aris..." Yur muttered in shaky voice.

"It's okay, they won't be able to detect you as a spirit since you're capable of erasing your presence as a great spirit," Aris said and grab Yur's fluffy body to the front so she could pat Yur's fluffy feathers.

Rasmus found out that Ure in the human language was Owl, and that made Yur the spirit of an owl. All the spirits from Ure were basically owls, hiding themselves from humans and other beings that used to civilized in Neva.

Based on Yur's explanation, there were five kinships of spirits that oversee Neva. Ure the owl, Lon the wolf, Trel the tiger, Ban the eagle, and lastly Mun the rabbit. Five spirit kinships in five continents, but there were more smaller spirit kinships that existed in all over Neva.

Ure and Mun were the architects of Neva, Lon and Trel were the punishers, and Ban the watcher and the actuator. The five of them worked together to make sure Neva was inhabitable for every living thing while at the same time to prevent living things from invading and killing each other.

However, humans were different, they were destroyers of nature. Spirits witnessed how humans dared to hunt Orthias, the ones who taught them about the world, how to survive. Not all humans were bad, not all spirits despise them, and so, the spirits chose to step away and let the humans do whatever they want while the spirits kept maintaining the world.

"How far are we from the Refenus Kingdom?" Aris asked as she looked at Rasmus while caressing Yur's fluffy back.

"Three weeks to a month," Rasmus answered as he looked at the moonlight as he pulled out a map. "Our destination is somewhere near the border of the Refenus Kingdom, the Trivula Forest..." he muttered as he looked at the map where there was a mountain not far from the forest which matched with the one he saw in his dream.

(At the same time in Gratlan)

Carrion and Erlina landed on the famous and the only floating island in Neva. They were both baffled and speechless when they saw how beautiful the island was. They never thought they would set their foot on the island where it oversee the peace and the future of humankind.

"Lord Carrion, Lady Erlina," an old butler said with a smile as he approached them. "My master, Marquess Garret has been waiting for your arrival," he bowed down to them.

"My brother is waiting for us? How did he know that we are coming?" Carrion furrowed his brows, staring at the butler with suspicion. They managed to enter Gratlan with Astrea's permission since she was a part of the Council of Neva, and nobody knew that they were coming yet.

The butler only smiled, and then pointed his hand at the carriage that was waiting for them.

Carrion reluctantly followed the butler with Erlina walking beside him. He still couldn't understand how Garret knew that he was coming to Gratlan.

"You need to relax, Carrion," Erlina placed her hand on Carrion's back. "In the end, if something happened and it was quite unfavorable to us, we could just report it to Rasmus," she added as she chuckled.

"Right, but I'm just curious about it, that's all," Carrion nodded in agreement.

"Then ask. It's as simple as it can be," Erlina caressed Carrion's back. "You don't care about him anyway, so put aside your pride," she continued.

"Ugh, I don't know. You sounded so different now, but still the same at the same time," Carrion glanced at Erlina, remembering that she was just a Madam of the brothel house. "I guess people grows when they're in a bigger pond," he muttered as he looked at the carriage.

"Of course. If you don't grow, you'll end up being eaten by the bigger fish," Erlina answered as she messed up Carrion's hair. "Enough of that, let's get into the carriage and see what your brother has to offer us," she smiled gently at Carrion. "There's nothing to worry about since we have Javi as our shadow," she glanced over her shoulder and couldn't sense Javi at all ever since they unboarded the blimp.

Carrion and Erlina could barely understand Javi since they boarded the blimp. They only had small talk with Javi throughout the whole journey, trying to find out how it was to live as an assassin, but they got nothing. Even for Erlina who could make any man open up to her, she failed miserably, just like how she failed to understand Rasmus.

They got into the carriage and let the coachman lead them to where Garret was waiting. They looked at the amazing architecture and the looming and towering Council of Neva palace that was located at the center of the floating island. They also looked at the Magic Tower that pierced through the clouds and could only see a shadow of the tip of it in the far distance. They were baffled by how different Gratlan was, compared to any place in the whole Neva.

"I wonder if they see only beauty from up here, do they even care anymore about what's going below this island?" Carrion asked as he crossed his arms, staring out the window with a serious and cold expression.

"If such people exist up here, then the future of humankind is doomed, Carrion. I'm not saying that they don't exist, but they might be easily erased from this place," Erlina answered, staring out the window from on the opposite side. "I'm not being positive, but the people that were involved in taking back South Neva were the people that came from this place, like Great Sage Lenin and her disciple, Novia. As long as those two exist in this place, evil won't dare to touch this place," she explained with a soft gaze pointed at the Magic Tower.

"It was all Rasmus's, Erlina. We both know that. These people, they only uphold righteousness, which isn't a good thing to have. Someone like Rasmus, who doesn't care about what's right or wrong, managed to save humankind," Carrion muttered.

"If that's the case, then I guess the world is doomed already," Erlina responded with a chuckle.

Chapter 317 - 317: Noble lady.

Carrion and Erlina looked at the big mansion in front of them. Carrion didn't know that his brother, Garret had a mansion in Gratlan. It didn't take a while until Erlina pushed his back gently and forced her to enter the mansion with her.

The butler brought them to the parlor where Garret and his associate were. Carrion and Erlina looked at each one of them drinking their tea, oozing the atmosphere of people in power from behind the scene.

"Finally, you're here, Carrion," Garret smiled as he crossed his legs. "Lady Erlina," he bowed his head to Erlina.

Erlina smiled as she bowed her head at Garret to respect his status since the Earnwind family was one of the most powerful families in South Neva. She got herself a title as Marquess which was on equal with Garret, but she was nowhere near as influential as the Earnwind.

"Please, have a seat. I believe you two are here for these two?" Garret pointed at the couch across the table and then pointed at Esprella Bleuman and Rouben Orbeliani.

Garret and Erlina took a seat next to each other as they looked at Esprella and Rouben. They both learned about the Bleuman and the Orbeliani families while they were on their journey to Gratlan. They found out how powerful those two families were, the ones that controlled the economy from behind the scenes.

"How do you know that we are coming?" Carrion asked, staring at Garret with his brows furrowed.

"How do I know? Because Rasmus told me," Garret smiled as he leaned back. "He knows that you two might need a place to live and be safe from the heat that Rasmus is radiating. He predicted this," he explained.

Carrion and Erlina were a bit surprised that Rasmus had planned everything for them. They were glad that he thought of this through while at the same time giving them an opportunity to spread their influence in Central Neva.

"So, Lady Erlina, Lord Carrion, what do we owe the pleasure?" Esprella asked, taking a sip of her tea gracefully. Although she was old, she had the undeniable charm and intimidation in the way she spoke and her mannerisms.

"My brother might have revealed the reason why we both came here before we came. So, we will make it quick," Carrion said as he took a deep breath. "Are you interested in a partnership?" He asked with a serious expression.

Esprella and Rouben glanced at each other, speaking with their eyes.

"Partnership in what exactly, Lord?" Rouben asked with his brows raised.

"Mines, Mana Stones mines," Carrion answered. "I believe I can make your cost of production for the wristwatch to be significantly lowered if you chose to have partnership with us," he explained as he stared at Esprella and Rouben.

"That's an interesting proposal you have there, Lord Carrion. But I believe you don't have any mines, as far as I know," Esprella asked, tilting her head and staring at Carrion.

Garret also didn't know that Carrion owned any mines in South Neva. He was confused, but he kept his expression straight.

"I do have a few mines that I bought from the fallen nobles," Erlina answered, smiling at Esprella. "The exact number is a secret, but I can assure you, that it's more than what you think," she added.

"You have the mines, so why is my brother the one who proposes it?" Garret asked with his brows furrowed.

"Because Carrion also has some, and again, the number is a secret," Erlina answered, pulling the balance in the conversation back. "If Rasmus managed to plan everything for us to be here, what makes you think that he didn't plan everything for us long before the war with the demon forces even happened?" She asked back, tilting her head, making her and Carrion to have the high ground.

Garret was lost for words and realized the difference between then and now. He was leisurely fishing in the big lake, believing he was the one in control. He saw Rasmus as one of the fish in the lake before, and now he realized how Rasmus was no longer a fish, he became a man who fished in the vast sea with big ships behind him.

"Let's be honest here," Carrion said with a serious expression as he stared at the three of them. "Central Neva, West Neva, East Neva are still dealing with the demons that are still hiding. Once the war broke, your supplies will disappear. The only place where peace is still exist? Down south," he pointed out with a cold smile on his face.

Esprella and Rouben had been thinking about that ever since the war broke out in South Neva. They knew the world would be in shambles soon, and their wealth, power, and influence would be useless. They weren't blind enough to those three things and still prioritized their own safety.

"Ah, and one more thing," If you want to take refuge, you're very welcome to stay in my humble mansion," Erlina said as she chuckled. "We have everything you need, even private ships that allows you move around freely while the whole world is shutting down their borders," she added.

"Imagine, how much wealth you can save once the war is over. You still have everything while everyone else struggles to rebuild," Erlina arched her brows, smirking at them.

Esprella and Rouben furrowed their brows, confused by how it was possible. Garrett on the other hand, he found out that Commander Arka had finally fallen under Rasmus's palm. He didn't expect that Rasmus managed to monopolize the trading and shipping in South Neva, he also managed to possess the Commander of the sea.

"Just think about it, this partnership isn't just for the wristwatch, a simple product, it will affect your future. Honestly, we want to have this partnership, spreading our influence in Central Neva with your help. We will give you the safety of your mind and body, you will give us influence and power," Carrion said with a serious expression.

"I believe it's a fair trade, is it not?" Erlina smiled at them. "I hope all of you aren't like those people with shallow minds," she chuckled softly.

Esprella chuckled as she shook her head and took a sip of her tea. She then stared right into Erlina's eyes as she put down the teacup. Her gaze was sharp and it felt like Erlina was being stared naked by her.

"Fair? Is this what you call fair? What if we don't want to? We have our own connection to make now that you mention it. Money can buy everything, so please mine your manner, Lady Erlina," Esprella said with a straight face. "If you want fairness, then don't act that way," she warned.

Erlina put a cold smile on Esprella, a bit irritated by Esprella's words. They both knew they were trying to make each other on the lower ground, pushing each other into the corner, and yet Esprella confronted her for doing so.

"Oh, my apologies, Lady Esprella. I'm just treating people like how they treat me. If I offended you in any way, I didn't mean to," Erlina responded, staring into Esprella's eyes. "Then, how about we being fair now? We give you what you need, and you give us what you need," she offered with a serious expression.

Esprella didn't expect Erlina, a madam that used to run a brothel house could be this amazing. She had seen many noble ladies her whole life, none of them could stand up for themselves or keep calm under her confrontation. She found it interesting and wanted to know more about her because she could see the survivalist instinct in Erlina's eyes.

"Leave us," Esprella said without looking at Rouben and Garret. "I want to have a private conversation with her," she said with a serious expression, keeping staring at Erlina's eyes without averting her gaze.

Rouben and Garret respected Esprella since she was the oldest, the one who had been in the game the longest. They both nodded with understanding and slowly got up from their seats and left the room.

"I'll be fine, Carrion. I'll make sure that we will get what we want from this place," Erlina said with confidence as she kept her gaze at Esprella's eyes.

Carrion was a bit worried, knowing that Erlina was about to face Esprella, the one who was known to make anyone kneel before her. However, he knew that Erlina might be able to deal with someone like Esprella since she managed to be a part of parliament with her own power and skill. He then nodded with understanding and left the room without looking back.

There was only silence in the room for a full minute until Esprella crossed her arms and legs as she cleared her throat.

"You're so confident, Lady Erlina. But are you sure about that?" Esprella asked.

"I have been dealing with tons of women. I can tame any woman I want and make them work for me. Just don't blame me if you ended up losing your pride here," Erlina answered coldly.

Esprella responded with a chuckle and a smirk on her face.

Chapter 318 - 318: Dangerous couple.

Carrion went to the garden and listened to the sound of the wind that passed the floating island. It sounded like he was on a blimp, but the sound was a lot louder, and yet it was calming. He was sitting on the edge of the bench, worrying Erlina, since he knew really well how nobles played their games.

"So... how does it feel to become a player in the bigger game?" Garret asked, crossing his arms and staring down at Carrion. "I remember you were just a good-for-nothing brother of mine, but now, you seem to have changed drastically," he said coldly.

Carrion glanced at Garret with a cynical gaze, annoyed by Garret's presence. He didn't feel like he was changing in the slightest, and he was still the same person as before. However, he remembered that he said the same thing to Erlina earlier, just like how Garret had just said to him.

"And that's a problem for you? You already got what you wanted, becoming the head of the Earnwind family. Why do you care what I do now? Are you perhaps anxious that I might become someone bigger than you?" Carrion asked coldly.

"We were never close to each other, not even when we were young. Just because we have been seeing each other often recently, doesn't make us close," Carrion stood up and fixed his attire. "Soon, I'll get rid of the Earnwind from my name. We won't be related anymore," he said coldly as he walked past Garret.

Garret watched Carrion walk around the garden with his back straightened and broad shoulders. The difference was uncanny, and especially Carrion didn't have that pale skin and sluggish body like a drunkard anymore.

"You're going to get rid of the Earnwind from your name? You're replacing it with what? Your own?" Garret asked, keeping his gaze at Carrion.

"Rustihel, as in Marquess Erlina Rustihel," Carrion answered, and then left the garden.

Garret found it uncanny that Carrion showed a glimpse of Rasmus from the way he spoke and walked. He realized how powerful and influential Rasmus was to be able to turn his good-for-nothing brother into a fine man. He couldn't help but to put a faint smile as he watched Carrion enter the mansion.

"Finally, you have a reason to live," Garret chuckled as he shook his head.

Carrion was walking in the hallway toward the parlor, and he saw Erlina standing in front of Esprella. He stopped his step and watched how those two no longer had those fierce gazes at each other. He didn't know if it was a good sign or not, so he decided to approach them and find out.

"Here you are, the future husband," Esprella said with a smile on her face.

Carrion raised his brows, shocked at how Esprella knew about him and Erlina and that they were going to marry each other later. He then moved his gaze toward Erlina, furrowing his brows, wondering what had happened in that room between those two.

"So, how did it go?" Carrion asked as he cleared his throat.

"Well, there's no way of telling if the ship is safe or not before it endures the heavy storm first. If your goods are promising with that kind of price in the first six months, we will keep this partnership sail," Esprella answered as she crossed her arms. "But be wary, our demands are quite high right now. You need to start mining those mines of yours," she said with her eyes narrowed.

Carrion and Erlina shared a look, and then they both smirked at each other. Esprella found it intriguing, tilting her head as she looked at both of them back and forth.

"We have mined lots of Mana stones long before we came to this continent. Just tell us how much you need, then we will ship them to you directly," Erlina said as she wrapped her arm around Carrion's arm. "After all, I managed to tame the old tiger, the one that led the pact," she chuckled as she stared at Esprella.

Esprella chuckled and then turned into soft laughter as she covered her mouth with the back of her hand. She was astonished by the fact those two knew that she was the target all along.

"You two are going to be a troublesome couple..." Esprella said as she walked past them. "I will inform the others about this partnership. You two can go upstairs and rest, we will protect you, hiding behind the curtains just like the rest of us," she smirked as she looked at both of them from over the shoulders.

Esprella saw Garret and Rouben at the end of the hallway, and she put a soft smile on her face. Those two were waiting for her, waiting to tell what happened inside the room.

"The infamous Esprella Bleuman got defeated?" Rouben raised his brows, mildly shocked.

"That young woman..." Esprella turned around to look at Erlina, who was smiling and leaning her head on Carrion's shoulder. "A madam of a brothel with such a dangerous mind. If women could fall for her, no man could stand a chance," she muttered as she shook her head and scoffed in disbelief.

Garret looked at how close Carrion and Erlina were as if they were meant for each other. He knew enough about Erlina since he put someone in to keep an eye on his brother. However, he didn't know the background of Erlina, only the tip of the iceberg.

"One who's pessimistic and skeptic, the other is ambitious and composed. One prevents the other from reaching too high that might hurt the fall, and one prevents the other from looking down and burying himself in the ground like a good-for-nothing," Garret said as he crossed his arms. "They're dangerous, and meant for each other," he added.

"Let those two rest, and I believe Great Sage Lenin would love to know about these two arrivals. After all, she wants to keep an eye on Count Blackheart's people," Esprella said, and then walked away.

Rouben and Garret nodded in agreement, then followed Esprella back to the academy. The three of them still held high status in the Gratlan academy, and Lenin was always there in her office as the Chancellor.

Erlina collapsed on the couch and almost became one with it because of how exhausted she was when she had to deal with Esprella. Carrion couldn't help but chuckle and sit beside her, watching how it took a huge toll on her mind.

"Good work. I honestly didn't know that you could pull that off," Carrion said as he looked at the window.

"Well, we had discussed this before with Rasmus. To take such a high risk, we need to consider the consequences both from the success and the failure. We have planned everything, and now we need to tread carefully," Erlina said as she stared blankly at the ceiling. "Now it's your turn, Carrion," she looked at Carrion with a soft gaze.

"Right..." Carrion sighed as he nodded. "To convince Great Sage Lenin to be a part of our partnership as well while at the same time keeping an eye on her," he muttered as he looked at the ceiling, remembering Rasmus's request.

"It won't be an easy task, and manipulation or lies won't work against her. Rasmus wants you to act like yourself and purely wants you to do business with her. She must have known a lot about you from your brother, so use that against her," Erlina said with a serious expression.

"I know," Carrion nodded with understanding. "I have been meeting and talking with lots of people, I know what I'm doing..." He sat straight and rested his elbows on his thighs, staring at the spot on the

wall. "Rasmus said that she might be keeping an eye on us as well since we are going to be here," he glanced at Erlina, and to his surprise, she was asleep so soundly.

"You must be exhausted, huh?" Carrion sighed as he slowly got up from the couch, making sure that he didn't wake Erlina up. "How can you fall asleep in that attire..." He looked at Erlina in her complicated dress.

Carrion carefully carried Erlina's light body, and suddenly Erlina opened her eyes, staring right into his eyes with a soft smile on her face. Carrion still couldn't believe that the woman in his arms, accepted him for who he was even though she knew that he used to be an alcoholic and played with lots of her women in her brothel. He felt like he didn't deserve such a woman, but he couldn't say it because at the same time, he was happy and wanted this.

"Thank you," Erlina said in a groggy voice as she wrapped her arms around Carrion's neck.

"Good work. You deserve to rest now, and I'll make sure nobody will disturb your sleep," Carrion nodded and brought her to the bed. As soon as he put her on the bed, he smiled at her and said, "Good night."

Erlina didn't answer because she fell asleep again, as soon as she hit the bed.

Chapter 319 - 319: Honey trap.

Novia was waiting at the entrance to the Magic Tower because she was notified by Lenin that Carrion and Erlina were coming to visit. She already knew what it was all about, and she was entrusted with dealing with those two. She then saw Carrion and Erlina walk out of the carriage, staring at the towering building that pierced through the sky.

"Welcome to the Magic Tower, Lord Carrion, Lady Erlina," Novia smiled as she approached them. "It's a pleasure to see you two, and I believe we didn't have the chance to get to know each other back in South Neva," she added.

"Yes, we both were in a different kind of reality back then. You were fighting the demons at the front line, and we both tried to maintain the situation at the back," Carrion nodded in agreement.

"That's true..." Novia nodded, her gaze blank because she still couldn't erase the powerlessness and the colossal being that could destroy the whole continent faster than any human could do. "Please, follow me. We will talk in a more suitable place," she put on a forced smile and walked toward the entrance.

Carrion and Erlina were expecting this to happen where they wouldn't be able to meet Lenin in person. They had planned everything for every outcome, and their goal was still the same, to tie the Magic Tower to them. Knowing that Novia would be the face that they were going to see often, they still could use her to find out about what was going on in Central Neva.

Erlina gently placed her hand on Carrion's lower back as she walked behind him. They shared a look and blinked their eyes, understanding each other with that simple gesture.

Erlina had discussed this with Carrion beforehand that if they were going to deal with Novia, Lenin would expect Erlina to approach Novia. However, Erlina knew that, and kept Carrion to deal with this to catch Lenin off guard and to lower her guard slightly. The truth was both Erlina and Carrion were capable of seeing people's true colors, and the difference was how they used their approach.

Novia watched how those two kept their mouths open when they looked at how spacious the magic tower was. They couldn't believe the inside of the tower that was bigger than a small town.

"This is just ridiculously massive..." Carrion muttered under his breath as he looked around him where hundreds of Scholars, Arch Mages, and Sages walk around with scrolls, books, or Mana stones in their hands.

"Yes, sometimes I also think this place is a bit too much. However, even with this massive and towering building, we are already running out of space," Novia said with a smile on her face as she stood in the center of a magic formation on the floor. "Let's use this teleportation formation since it will take a while to reach the 700th floor if we use the floating platform," she pointed out.

Carrion and Erlina could only raise their brows, baffled by everything that was happening. They then stood behind Novia and watched how she used a ring to activate the magic formation. Carrion who could understand and use basic magic found the complicated formation to be discouraging.

The moment the light appeared on the edge of the circle and towering over them, the three of them saw nothing but a blinding white light. The moment they opened their eyes, they had already reached

the 700th floor. It was an instant, and both Carrion and Erlina's jaws dropped by how advanced the Magic Tower was.

Novia brought them to a room where they were surrounded by frameless windows. They could see the whole view of the floating island from above. It was something that not everyone could experience or witness, and they were quite lucky to be there.

"Please, have a seat, Lord Carrion, Lady Erlina," Novia pointed her right hand at the couch in the middle of the room with the amazing view of the vast blue sky.

Carrion cleared his throat and nodded as he made himself comfortable on the couch beside Erlina. He then watched how Novia used telekinetic magic to brew the tea and pour it into teacups.

Carrion and Erlina, both realized what Novia was trying to do. The gentle and warmth that Novia showed to them, there was a subtle reminder to them that they were insignificant to the Magic Tower. They realized they were sitting in front of someone that could be said to be the mouth, or even the will of the Great Sage herself.

"We can go straight to business if you want to. Since I'm entrusted by the Great Sage, I believe pleasantries aren't needed for the proxy," Novia smiled at both of them.

"If we treat you that way, I believe that will only make us disrespectful. Even a simple piece of paper that has an emperor's decree is enough to make people in the East Neva to kneel and bow their heads," Carrion said with a smile. "But I understand that we both are quite busy, and we cannot waste time for something unnecessary while the world is on the brink of collapsing," he said with a serious expression as he looked at the vast sky.

Novia realized that her plan to make both of them feel uncomfortable didn't work. It was a test to see if they had an ulterior motive behind their visit for a partnership. Carrion believed there was an ulterior motive, and she entrusted Novia with revealing it.

"Yes, you're not wrong, Lord Carrion," Novia nodded with a serious expression. She glanced at Erlina, who didn't bother to join in the conversation and only enjoyed the tea silently.

"Since Lady Novia already knows the reason for our visit, let's cut to the chase. We are offering you Mana stones, selling them to the Magic Tower. We are willing to give 70% of our Mana stones to the Magic Tower," Carrion said, staring into Novia's eyes.

"We already have tons of Mana stones from every corner of all Neva's continents. Can you give me a reason why we should consider your offer, Lord Carrion?" Novia asked with her arms crossed and brows furrowed.

"Because you would regret it if the Magic Tower didn't utilize the Mana stones that were stored away in some warehouses, covered in dust. With our current situation, I believe that the Magic Tower is preparing to create something that can help humankind to fight the demons," Carrion answered as he sat straight, his eyes never leaving Novia's. "We both know how powerless we were back then in South Neva. If only we had magic tools, magic weapons, or even a whole arsenal that the Magic Tower could invent, wouldn't that be enough to make a difference?" He asked back with his brows furrowed.

Novia was taken aback by how Carrion knew about the Magic Tower's plan to create something that was powerful enough to prevent the demon forces from taking over the world. Ever since her and Lenin went back to Gratlan after the war, the whole Magic Tower was busy creating magic tools and weapons to prepare for the inevitable wars. She believed that Rasmus was the one who told Carrion about it since Rasmus was used to be an important guest of Magic Tower who knew about the research in magic tools.

"Every second matter now, Lady Novia. We are here not to gain profit, we are here to help. What's the point of wealth, power, and influence if one day everything won't matter anymore," Carrion said as he clasped his hands together while his elbows rested on his knees.

"If you're willing to help, why only 70% of the Mana stones? Why did you give the remaining to Lord Carrion, Lady Esperella, and Lord Rouben? Didn't you say you weren't looking for a profit?" Novia asked with her brows raised and head tilted.

"Because we aren't martyrs, Lady Novia. I apologize if that offends you, but if we are giving everything to the Magic Tower, we would have nothing, and we wouldn't be able to do anything about it if one day the Magic Tower decided to take not only the Mana stones but the whole mining sites? Should we risk it? No, we still care about ourselves," Carrion answered without hesitation.

Novia glanced at Erlina and still couldn't believe how quiet Erlina was. She was expecting Erlina to get involved in the conversation by now and revealed their ulterior motive. However, what she had

predicted, they were pointless because there was no sign of those two of trying to take advantage of this.

Novia closed her eyes and sighed as she nodded with understanding, finding Carrion's excuse to be reasonable. She thought for a moment, letting the silence fill the room. However, suddenly she felt like she was the one who got uncomfortable by this, even though it was her that tried to do that to them. She realized that she had just fallen from her own traps that she had placed for those two.

"I'll convey your words to my master, Lord Carrion, Lady Erlina. We will contact you once we got our answer," Novia said with a serious expression.

"Yes, of course. Please do take your time, but we hope that we can be of a help to the Magic Tower," Carrion said as he stood up.

"Yes, I'll escort you out," Novia nodded and got up from her seat.

Chapter 320 - 320: Truths.

Lenin played with a sphere Mana stone in her hand after she listened to everything that Novia had reported. She expected this to happen, especially when she was against Rasmus. She had high hopes for Novia, but she knew it would be too much to ask since Novia had never dealt with someone like him.

"I'm sorry, Master. I failed to reveal their true intention, or their ulterior motives," Novia said, lowering her head a bit in guilt.

"Their true intention is always in the open, Novia. Their intention is to tie themselves with the Magic Tower," Lenin answered as she shook her head. "They're hiding nothing, and they revealed everything already," she continued as she kept staring at the Mana stone.

"That's how Rasmus plays his game. Why do you think people follow him, Novia? It's because he's always transparent when he persuades them. The best part? He gave them freedom, and that freedom only exists whenever he's going, and that's why they follow him," Lenin explained as she put down the Mana stone and looked at Novia.

"You weren't falling to their traps, you were falling on your own traps you placed. They didn't follow your lead, they were stationed, and the moment you lost your composure, you fell into your own trap," Lenin continued, staring at Novia who seemed bothered by it.

Novia took a deep breath and sighed in frustration as she leaned back in her chair. She still despised Rasmus for who he was, however, she hated the fact that she always fell short when she wanted to confront him.

"I raised you to handle threats, including people. I taught you how to deal with cunning, manipulative, power-hungry, and scheming people. However, I failed to teach you how to deal with someone like Count Blackheart," Lenin said as she sighed and leaned back in her chair, staring blankly at the bookshelf.

"Rasmus isn't a master of deceiver, Novia..." Lenin said as she stared into Novia's troubled gaze. "He's the master of clarity. He uses the truth as his weapon," she revealed.

Novia furrowed her brows, listening to her master's words. She noticed how Lenin always showed her true self, raw, and transparent whenever she was talking about Rasmus.

"Then are we going to just let him get what he wanted? Just because he used the truth?" Novia asked with a serious expression. "If he used the truth as his weapon, then we could make the truth against him," she pointed out.

Lenin raised her brows and began to chuckle when she heard Novia's words. She slowly straightened her back, and then leaned forward, resting her arms on her desk.

"Novia, his truth isn't shrouded by moral and feelings. The truth he takes, it's the purest form of the truth. A truth where it hurts anyone but the one who presented it," Lenin said with a smile on her face. "Have you not realized why he can go this far with only the truth as his weapon? Because none of us holds the truth as is. We are the one who's shrouded by the shades of the truth, believing the truth is exactly how we want it to be," she revealed as she rested her cheek on her palm.

Novia closed her eyes, her brows furrowed and her troubled expression was obvious to Lenin.

"Then what can we do? You're thinking highly of him, but you never told me the solution to this," Novia asked with a disturbed expression.

"A blacksmith won't hit the straightened steel," Lenin answered without hesitation. "But the cost of straightening the steel, which means the steel has to get rid of some of itself whether it likes it or not," she continued.

"As long as there's a bent in the truth, he will keep hammering his hammer. If we resist it, are we not the problem?" Lenin tilted her head, raising her brows.

"Master... I don't have the mood for this. Please, stop talking in such a manner. Just answer my question," Novia frowned, staring into Lenin's eyes.

"Some tools need to be curvy, to have a bit of dent, and some even wavy and asymmetrical. You already know the answer, and it's to use the truth against him. Once the truth aligns with us, he's powerless," Lenin answered as she sat straight and looked outside the window. "Right now, the truth is in his favor. He holds something that makes him invincible where humans and demons want him," she added.

Novia looked at the Mana stone at the desk, thinking about what she had heard from her master. Although she was young and still couldn't hold her temper, she was mature enough to listen and learn from Lenin's words.

"So, we don't have any plan to stop him?" Novia asked with her head tilted.

"Of course we have, my dear disciple..." Lenin answered as she stood up. "We are going to accept Lord Carrion's offer of partnership. We are going to play along with Count Blackheart's plan for now," she revealed as she walked toward the window. "We will let him lead. Then there will be a moment where he has to decide when the truth will no longer align with him. That's when we make our move, slowly cornering him," she explained as she placed her hand on the glass, staring at the distance.

"What if that moment never came, Master?" Novia asked as she stood up and approached Lenin. "What if the moment came but it was already too late?" She asked, standing beside Lenin and stared at her.

"Not everyone will follow his view of the world, Novia. Those who follow him, they're not sharing their views with him. He might give them freedom, and that freedom he gave them, that will turn into a problem for him," Lenin answered, glancing at Novia. "He doesn't care if he's the evil one, and that's what we are going to use that against him. We are going to antagonize him," she continued as she crossed her arms.

"You're letting more and more people see his true color, Master?" Novia asked with her brows raised.

"Yes, letting them see his true color is a part of the truth. The truth that will slowly bend the truth he's seeing and what we are seeing. Two truths can exist at the same time," Lenin nodded as she stared at Novia. "This is how we are going to fight against him. We are using his logic against him, and we are going to confront him like how he confronts others," she explained.

Novia hummed as she nodded with understanding, thinking that it was a perfect plan to fight someone like Rasmus. She wouldn't be able to pull such a master plan like her master, and the world would fall into chaos if there was nobody in the world with such a mind as her master.

"Then I'll inform Lord Carrion and Lady Erlina about their offering. We will take their offer, yes?" Novia asked.

Lenin nodded, and then looked out the window at the vast night sky where the clouds were below her, and the moons were shining brightly above her.

(At the same time in the palace of the Holy Nation)

Sima was observing the wound on Astrea's back left hand without blinking his eyes for almost a minute. They both were looking at the wound, holding their breaths because it had been days since Sima had used different types of medicine to test on her wound. So far, there wasn't a single medicine that could heal her wound, and this medicine was the seventh medicine that Sima had made.

When they both were staring nonstop at the wound, they suddenly heard the sound of the flesh moving. They both immediately leaned in since it was the first time that the wound had reacted to the medicine. They saw when the wound dried up a bit, and it was a very good sign.

"What does this mean, Divine Physician?" Astrea asked, her eyes were bright.

"This means the medicine might be able to heal your wounds, Your Holiness," Sima answered, however he didn't sound thrilled or excited. He kept his expression stoic and his tone flat. "I'm not saying that this might work thoroughly, but this will help the wounds to dry up, and that's the most important and crucial part," he explained with a serious expression.

"I think you have done enough if you could make these wounds dry, Divine Physician. I'm not expecting you to be able to heal my wounds in the first place. However, seeing how capable you are, I believe this is already more than enough," Astrea said with a weak smile.

"Are you sure about this whole thing, Your Holiness?" Sima asked as he took a few steps back and stared at Astrea with a gentle gaze. "You said those wounds are a form of punishment, a reminder from your God. If I chose to heal those wounds, wouldn't that make you against your God's will?" He added.

"I have devoted my whole life for God and his creations. Is it selfish if I want to be myself, to live for my daughter? If getting better is a form of living my life for my daughter so she won't be worried about me, am I wrong? Isn't my daughter also God's creation?" Astrea asked.

Sima closed his eyes and nodded with understanding.

"Then I'll prepare more of this medicine. We will begin our treatment tomorrow, Your Holiness. Please, get some rest," Sima bowed his head, and then walked away.

Astrea smiled weakly as she nodded and watched Sima leave the room.