

Evil 341

Chapter 341: A vassal.

"You're giving me this?" Rasmus looked down at the crest in his hand.

"Let's just say it's a token of our friendship," Anastasha smiled as she looked at the Asghar family crest in Rasmus's hand. "You can use it for whatever reason you want it to be," she said without hesitation.

Rasmus stared at the crest for a few seconds before he put it in the spatial ring. It was something that he would never have thought to possess, and he had no idea how many people in the world were given such power by the Asghar family.

"Even if it would destroy your family status?" Rasmus asked with his brows raised.

"Oh, don't threaten me with good news, Count..." Anastasha chuckled as she crossed her arms. "You know that I want to break down my family to prevent my brothers from killing each other because of the power of my family. I will allow it," she said, her eyes showing no lies or deceptions.

"Even if you used it to destroy the Asghar family name and status, who would dare to point their anger at my family?" Anastasha smirked as she rested her arms on the table. "But if you did it, just tell them you were sent by one of my brothers. I would love to see them fume in anger," she winked as she bit her lip.

Rasmus smiled softly as he nodded with understanding.

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Heward cleared his throat as he slowly lowered his gaze, not daring to stare directly at those three anymore. He didn't know what to feel about having the Asghar family take an interest in him. He didn't even dare to ask for a reason because it would put him at an unknown risk.

"I thought you would keep that calm you had not too long ago, Viscount," Rasmus said with a cold gaze.

"My apologies. I never expected this, Lord Vije..." Heward said with a soft smile on his face, hiding the turmoil within him.

"There's no reason for you to be so afraid of. I believe Guild Master Gorge has explained everything already?" Rasmus asked.

"Yes, I heard you came because a friend of mine told you about me. Eduard is a good merchant, he and I had known each other for almost a decade," Heward answered as he nodded, slowly braving himself to maintain eye contact. "However, I didn't expect that he would have a connection with the Asghar family..." he said in a quiet voice.

"Don't you have something similar here, Viscount Heward? To see a Viscount with such wealth and climb this high in just one generation, don't you have a deep connection with someone above your status?" Rasmus asked with a cold smile. "However, I'm not going to question your amazing achievements since it's none of my business, isn't that right, Viscount?" He added.

Heward could easily devour anyone and make them regret for questioning his achievements. However, the one who dared to do so was someone who had a deep connection with the Asghar family, and all he could do was let his face be rubbed on dirt. There was a hint of warning from Rasmus's words that forced him to keep his thoughts to himself rather than speak them out loud.

"Yes, I agree, Lord Vije," Heward nodded with a smile on his face, but this time the smile was a bit forced.

Aris and Rullein were silently staring at Heward, listening to everything and watching Rasmus play his game. Rullein was enjoying the wine and the whiskey that were prepared on the table. She didn't care about the conversation at all, and it reminded Aris of how she used to be like that before.

"Shall we not go around the bushes? I believe a Viscount like you is busy," Rasmus said as he leaned his back forward, resting his elbows on his thighs. "The reason for our visit is to ask you if it's possible for us to attend Princess Amarylis' coming-of-age ceremony? With your influence, I believe you can pull a few strings for us," he said with a serious expression.

Heward could feel and could tell the danger behind Rasmus's intentions. He looked at the three of them in the eyes, thinking if he should help them or not. The risk, the reward, and the possible outcomes were happening inside his head at that moment.

"Why me, My Lord? Without showing any disrespect or doubt, shouldn't the Asghar family have a deeper connection that can pull the strings for you so easily?" Heward asked, trying to keep his heart calm after it was beating so fast for a few minutes.

"I want you to assume that the Asghar family has no connection at all on this continent," Rasmus said, staring into Heward's eyes with a cold gaze. "Of course, you're allowed to assume otherwise, but are you sure you want to peek into a place that you shouldn't see? I'll make sure the Young Master knows if you do," he said, slowly forming a cold smile.

The moment Rasmus mentioned the Young Master, Heward immediately realized who was behind Rasmus. He knew how influential and powerful the Asghar family was in East Neva. He also heard rumors that all the young masters, including Anastasha who had joined the battle of succession. He realized he was no longer testing the water, he was drowning.

Heward knew this whole thing was too much heat for him and he knew that he would burn before he could see the end of it. He knew what to do, and he knew that he didn't want to be a part of this anymore.

"My apologies, Lord Vije, Lady Sira, and Lady Lurein. I can't help you with that, and I don't think I have the power to pull something like that," Heward answered, determined that he chose to look away and walk away.

"So you choose to ignore the Asghar family's request, is that right? Viscount Heward?" Rasmus asked as he clasped his hands together, his gaze and expression were cold and stoic.

Heward cursed in his heart as he gritted his teeth, realizing he had made a huge mistake from inviting them in the first place. He cursed at himself because of his opportunistic side of him that made him believe he could take and handle the risk.

"No, that's not the issue, Lord Vije..." Heward paused as he clenched his fists. "I just want to live. I can't survive if I'm involved in this..." He said, his words sounded like a plea rather than a reason.

Even after Heward pleaded for his life and his future, he didn't see any sympathy or empathy from those three. He realized he was pleading to a wall, hoping it wouldn't crush him, knowing well that his plea was pointless.

"Viscount Heward, I'm just an instrument, and the Young Master is the hands that wield it. If my master wishes me to sharpen the blade, then I shall reshape and bend the steel. If the steel is useless, then I have no choice but to break it and throw it away before moving to reshape the other steel," Rasmus said with a stoic expression. "You're already knowing too much, and there's no going back here, Viscount. Either you bend or break and be thrown away."

Heward knew the only way to survive was to accept the request and give them access to the ceremony. In a desperate situation, he had no choice but to bring others to drown with him. He then took a deep breath, steeling his heart, preparing to find a way to survive under the sea where the storm was happening.

"I'll bring you the invitations, Lord Vije. Just for the three of you, right?" Heward asked.

"Hmm, make it four, I have a gift for the royal family, an entertainment to be exact," Rasmus answered with a stoic expression, but his eyes were smiling. "Give us four invitations, and you will be rewarded," he continued.

"Four, Lord Vije?" Heward asked with a confused and anxious look on his face.

Rasmus didn't answer the question, only staring right into Heward's eyes. That alone was enough to make Heward lose his composure and chose to do what was told.

"I'll bring four invitation letters, Lord Vije. I will go to the capital city to discuss this matter with His Highness as soon as possible. You don't have to worry because I will bring what you need," Heward answered as he nodded with understanding.

Rasmus smiled coldly as he got up, knowing there was nothing else that he needed from Heward.

"Thank you for your time, Viscount Heward. Everything will be fine if you give us what we need, there's nothing to be worried about," Rasmus said as Aris and Rullein stood up from the couch. "We will excuse ourselves, have a good day, Viscount," he said as he bowed his head before he walked toward the door.

Heward didn't even bother to say a word or even look at them as they walked away.

"You have a beautiful family, Viscount. That big painting of your family downstairs, it's beautiful," Rasmus said with a smile before he decided to leave the parlor.

Heward felt a chill down his spine as he felt his heart drop to his gut. He took a deep breath as he closed his eyes, knowing exactly what Rasmus meant by that.

As soon as they left Heward's mansion, Aris was curious about Rasmus's way of dealing with Heward.

"What was that all about? Using the Asghar family as an excuse?" Aris asked, looking at Rasmus.

"Hmm, just helping a friend to get what she wanted," Rasmus answered.

Chapter 342: Journal of the past. (2)

Rasmus rented the whole inn for himself, Aris, and Rullein, allowing rumors to brew. The people in town already spoke a lot of things about him thanks to Yur who eavesdropped on the townspeople. In a town where hundreds of merchants came and went every day, it was a perfect place for him to gain recognition without doing anything.

Gorge also helped spread the rumors of Rasmus as Vije, a man from a respected family in the East. He also hinted at Rasmus's connection with the Asghar family, solidifying his persona as Vije even more.

"Aristoria never gave you these things?" Aris stared at Rullein with her brows furrowed, showing a hint of disgust and in disbelief.

"No..." Rullein answered as she wiped her lips with the back of her hand. She then put the empty bottle of whiskey on the counter. "This is delicious! I feel funny and I like it!" She giggled as she looked at dozens of empty bottles of alcohol.

"You're going to let her drink like this? You're spoiling her," Aris looked at Rasmus, who was reading Erglade's journal.

"Have I ever prevented you from doing whatever you want?" Rasmus asked, staring at Rullein, emptying another bottle in a matter of seconds.

"No, but this is getting out of hand," Aris answered as she glanced at Rullein, who was about to grab a wine bottle. "She needs to learn to control herself..." She snatched the bottle since it was her favorite.

"Look who's talking," Rasmus smiled as he shook his head and took his focus back on the journal.

Rasmus chose to find some peace by going upstairs, leaving those two alone. Aris watched Rasmus walk upstairs, realizing that she and Rullein were being too loud. She then decided to open the bottle of wine and pour it into two glasses, for her and for Yur.

Rasmus entered his room and chose to sit in the window alcove. He made himself comfortable as he read the journal and paid attention to the town. He was about to continue his reading when he noticed a glimpse of something black flew in the sky.

Rasmus saw a raven flying above the town, and then he used his draconic eyes to look at it. He could see the small scroll that was tied to one of the raven's legs. He realized it might be Javi's raven, and so he opened his window and sent Mana toward the raven to guide it toward him. As soon as the raven felt the Mana, it moved its head toward the window where Rasmus was sitting and began to fly toward him.

"You must be tired..." Rasmus said as the raven landed on his wrist. "You may rest for a while before I reply the message," he added as he grabbed the scroll from the raven's leg.

The raven croak quietly and seemed to understand Rasmus's words. It stayed in the room with him while Rasmus put water into the bowl for the raven to drink.

"Rasmus, we managed to make deals with Carrion's brother and his associates. We also managed to pull it off, getting the Magic Tower to make a deal with us. Right now, we are still at Gratlan, however, we heard the news about the Holy Nation, and the world is now focusing on them," Erlina wrote in the paper. "We should be fine here, but we are planning to leave Gratlan soon. We will prepare the minerals

for Carrion's brother and the Magic Tower, so we will be staying at Foern, a port city of the Lusia Kingdom," she added.

Rasmus burned the paper after he understood the content in there, and ripped a paper for him to write on. He pulled out a map of Central Neva to locate where Foern was located. He saw how it wasn't that far from the Cerdantis Kingdom, only two kingdoms away.

"Stay away from the Cerdantis Kingdom, and any neighboring nations. Nemu and two others like him are residing there. Keep your head low when you can, but if you can't, do what you must," Rasmus wrote in the paper as he listened to the raven's claws moving around the table.

Rasmus carefully tied the piece of paper onto the raven's leg, making sure it was tight enough to not fall off but not tight enough to hurt the raven's leg. Once he made sure the paper was stuck and firmly attached to the raven's leg, he gently brushed the raven's head.

"Take care," Rasmus said as he looked at the raven.

The raven stared at Rasmus for a moment before it croaked again and began to spread its wings. The raven then flew away silently, going up high into the sky to make sure no arrows could reach it. Rasmus watched the raven fly in case there was someone or something that tried to take it down. Once the raven flew away safely, Rasmus sighed and closed the window, continuing to where he had left off in the journal.

Rasmus sat at the window again and continued his read of where his father had just come back after eliminating the threat called a demonic cult. He read how his father was deeply shaken by what he found, his father wrote his heart into the journal how he saw countless bodies, from dozens of pregnant women that seemed to be forced to give labors but ended up killing them.

"We couldn't find the babies... this is sickening even for me..." Erglade wrote in the journal, his writing seemed different, the lines and the scratches seemed forced and unnatural. There was visible turmoil in his writing. "I don't know what to think. If this is a setting, then humans are worse than anything in this world. If this is really happening, what kind of sick person or being that made humans do such things..." He added, his writings seemed to be less forced, and less willingly as well.

Since that moment, more and more demonic cults that appeared across Central Neva. One thing that shocked Rasmus was the fact that his father was joining hands with the Holy Nation and the Suncrown Empire to deal with this issue. His father led the team to eliminate demonic cults that appeared almost simultaneously.

"At this point, I don't know what's going on anymore. The more we find out about demonic cults, the less we know about them. If I kept chasing the tail, I should be able to find the head eventually. However, why I feel like this creature keeps cutting its own tail and growing it over and over..." Erglade wrote in the journal.

Rasmus could see the pattern the moment his father wrote that paragraph. He could see it that he was indeed only chasing the tails that had been cut off from its body. However, he understood how overwhelming and stressful it was for his father to see it since he must have worked nonstop to get rid of them.

"They're quite smart to make my father lost his ability to think by giving him the sense of immediate threats that were actually not..." Rasmus muttered as he looked at the night sky with his brows furrowed. "To make a lie believable, you turn it into reality..." he continued and turned his focus back to the journal.

Rasmus looked at the thing that bothered him more than what bothered Erglade. It was when Erglade mentioned that the Holy Nation and the Suncrown Empire had joined hand to deal with the issue.

"How could these two powerful families that had ended the Great Era of Neva were unable to see it..." Rasmus narrowed his eyes. "Letting my father led the team while those two should be more experienced in dealing this kind of thing..." he muttered as he sighed.

Rasmus leaned his back against the wall, his eyes seemed to be moving from side to side as if he was scanning or searching for something that seemed amiss. He couldn't gather enough information because his father didn't reveal who made it possible for the two major nations to join the mission. If it was King Fredrick, then how did the royal family of a small Kingdom know more about them than the Holy Nation and the Suncrown Empire.

"Unless they want my father to fall into their trap, that's the only reasonable answer..." Rasmus crossed his arms with his head lowered. "Aurelia showed her hatred for her own mother and the Holy Nation for hiding the truth. This and that, they both seem to be connected with each other..." He rested his head against the wall and stared at the ceiling.

"You're so deep in thought that you don't even notice my presence at all," Aris said as she stood at the door.

Rasmus immediately turned his head to look at Aris who had seemed to be standing there for a while. He took a deep breath and nodded his head as he fixed his seat in the window alcove.

"Yeah... I am..." Rasmus got up and walked to the table to drink a glass of water.

"You know you could read everything in one go like how you read records and archives. But why you're taking this differently?" Aris asked with her arms crossed.

"Because I don't want to miss a thing..." Rasmus answered and emptied the glass in one go.

Chapter 343: Silent reports.

As the moon grew brighter, Rasmus decided to have a drink as well. His mind and body seemed to be in two different places. Aris and Rullein somehow chose to stay in the same room as him, watching him like an exotic animal.

"They're here," Rullein said, staring out the window at nothing. "The Black Hands are here," she pointed out.

Rasmus paused before he could empty the whiskey in the glass. He made his hearing and vision more sensitive as he looked outside the window. He never thought that no matter how quiet someone moved, the sound of them breaking the wind, it would still make a sound.

"One... two... three..." Rasmus muttered under his breath as he listened to the sound of wind disturbances from all over town. "All of them are here," he nodded.

Rasmus went to the first floor of the inn and unlocked the door. When he opened the door, he didn't see anyone and only darkness, but immediately one by one entered the inn without making a sound. They all hid their faces with the hood and the cloak they wore, blending into the night like ghosts that had just materialized when the light exposed them.

As soon as all of them entered the inn and Rasmus closed the door in front of him, he heard soft thuds. He turned around and saw all of them on their knees with their heads lowered.

"Rise, and have a seat..." Rasmus said, not needing such a grand greeting from his people. "Catch your breath first. The night is still long," he walked past them and sat at the counter.

All the Black Hands bowed down and went to the tables to sit. There weren't enough chairs to sit on for some of them, so Rasmus told them to sit at the counter and the stairs while he stood in the middle of the room.

Rasmus ordered Ayla to bring glasses of water for everyone as he looked at the faces who stared at him with utmost respect. He used the time to get to know them by asking for their names and their skills. He turned the tension into a more comfortable and relaxing one.

"Pull out your reports," Rasmus said as he walked toward one of the tables.

"My Lord! Allow me to collect all the reports..." Erdinand said as he stood up.

"Sit..." Rasmus glanced at Erdinan with a cold gaze. "All of you have done enough task, almost an impossible one as well. I don't need to be wrapped in cotton wool," he said as he took in the reports that the Black Hands handed him.

Erdinand bowed his head and went back to his seat.

Everyone watched how Rasmus approached one table to another with his hands reaching out for the reports rather than waiting to be given to him. It was a simple thing, but seeing someone with such authority, he chose to treat them more than just underlings and a bit lower than subordinates.

Rasmus stood in the middle and read the reports one by one from each individual. The first thing he read was a noble family that would attend Amarylis's coming-of-age ceremony. He found nothing suspicious of it and was quite surprised by how deep they dug in just three days.

Report after report, Rasmus read them and burned them into ashes. He then left a few reports in his hands, staring at them thoroughly for one more time. Those reports were the lead to what he wanted the Black Hands to investigate.

"Any of you met a Jester in the capital city?" Rasmus asked as he looked around with his arms crossed.

Slowly almost everyone raised their hands because they all had seen the Jester that Rasmus had met in the capital city. Those who didn't raise their hands, they weren't in the capital city and did their investigation somewhere else. Rasmus noticed how the Jester was so eccentric that it would be impossible for anyone to not pay attention to him. He then looked at Ayla who also raised her hand.

"Ayla, I want you to keep an eye on him. Protect him from death threats, other than that, you can just observe him in the distance," Rasmus said with a serious expression. "That Jester is my asset, don't let him die," he continued.

"Understood, My Lord," Ayla bowed her head with understanding.

Rasmus nodded and then looked at the report again, leaving the room in silence for a moment. He read the report about Viscount Heward and how he reached where he was. He bought the Viscount title not long after the rebellion ended, where the Refenus Kingdom was in crisis. With such wealth and contribution, Heward became a noble and had a deep connection with the nobles that were a part of the Low-Table based on his father's journal.

"There's no evidence of him partaking himself in the Low-Table?" Rasmus looked at the Black Hands.

"We tried our best and we couldn't find any sign of him of joining the Low-Table, My Lord," Deril answered with confidence. "However, we heard that he's going to visit the capital city, and we can gather more information about him, My Lord," he continued.

Rasmus looked at Deril and his group at the table, surprised that they already knew about Heward's plan of visiting the capital city. It hadn't been a day and it was a private conversation that he had with Heward. He didn't doubt the Black Hands's capability to gather information, but he didn't expect it to be this amazing.

"Even after all this years, there's nothing suspicious about him?" Rasmus asked as he looked around.

"Every month for the past decade, we have been moving in the shadows all over the Refenus Kingdom and the neighboring nations. We didn't find anything suspicious about Viscount Heward, My Lord. He's purely opportunist, but not greedy enough like the nobles because he's aware of his roots," Vena answered, there was no doubt in her voice. "Not all the nobles like him, My Lord. He's a nouveau riche parvenu, and he knew that," she continued.

Rasmus hummed as he nodded with understanding, finding that Heward had the skill and the control to keep himself survive in the political world. He remembered how Heward pleaded that he wanted to survive, and it aligned with what Vena said. He then wondered if Heward knew something about what was looming underneath the beautiful kingdom he was living in.

Rasmus then looked at the other report, the guest list of people that were invited to the ceremony. He compared it with the one that Gorge gave him, and he saw they were identical. Once again, he was amazed by the skill of the Black Hands that could gather such information. He then looked at the names that were blacklisted by Gorge, the names that seemed suspicious in his eyes.

"These six names..." Rasmus showed the report that Gorge gave him. "Belvia Sottol, Jacques Coreu, Francesco Sorza, William Shecil, Mirelda Norbridge, and Meredith Seriche. Guild Master Gorge mentioned that these six people are unaffiliated with the nobles, which means they're directly associated with the Royal family. I want all of you to investigate these names for me," he said with a serious expression.

"My Lord?" Daniel raised his hand.

"Yes?" Rasmus pointed his hand at Daniel, signaling him to speak.

"Belvia Sottol and Jacques Coreu used to be close aides of the Blackheart family during the late Count Erglade's time. They aided him in dealing with the demonic cult back then, and unfortunately, they died during a mission," Daniel answered.

"Is that so?" Rasmus raised his brows as he looked at the names on the report. "Any background history about them?" He asked Daniel.

"We tried to gather any information about them, but we found nothing back then. Everything about them didn't match from what they said. They seemed to appear and exist when they came to Blackheart's estate, and the late Count didn't trust them at all, but their skills were exceptional," Daniel answered.

Rasmus remembered what Gorge had said about these names, the names that he had never heard of before. He also remembered when Gorge said how confident he was when he knew someone that didn't belong in the kingdom. However, Danile's words contradicted Gorge's, and somehow it made things more intriguing and yet disturbing.

"Let's assume these names don't belong to humans," Rasmus said with a serious look on his face. "Split into six teams, try and gather any information related to them. We have at least three weeks before Princess Amarylis's coming-of-age ceremony. Go dark and into the unknown. Your safety is your number one priority, leave when you're in danger, and that's an order," he said with a stern look, staring at each one of them.

All the Black Hands bowed their heads without saying a word, only the sound of the rustling of their cloaks.

"Take a full-day rest, you earn it," Rasmus said, nodding his head as he walked toward the door and opened it for them. "Have a good night," he turned around to look at all the Black Hands standing, ready to leave.

One by one, all the Black Hands left the inn without making a noise, and as soon as they were bathed in the darkness, they disappeared without leaving a trace. Rasmus slowly closed the door, and his gaze was pointed at the door's handle he was holding. His mind was somewhere else, finding the whole thing to be deeply rooted in something that he was unaware of.

Chapter 344: God's name.

Aurelia was staring at the mirror, looking at herself in an all-white robe and accessories that decorated her ears, neck, and hands. She found herself staring into her own eyes with a cold gaze, slowly feeling like she was staring at someone else rather than herself. However, she snapped back to reality when she heard a knock on the door.

She watched the priestesses bring in her dinner since she had been spending her time dealing with the issues that had been happening. She didn't even have time alone in the past weeks, and wanted nothing but solitude in the quiet night.

"Your Holiness, Saint Serena and Saint Mother wished to see you," the priestess said with her head lowered.

"I see. If Saint Seren or my mother wished to see me in the future, please let them come. They don't need my permission to see me, and I want all of you to remember that," Aurelia said with a soft smile on her face.

"Yes, Your Holiness. We will inform the others, and we will excuse ourselves..." The priestesses bowed their heads before they left the room.

Not long after the priestesses left the room, Serena and Astrea came into the office. Serena was making sure Astrea wouldn't trip and fall. It had been weeks since Divine Physician Sima treated Astrea's wounds, and her condition was starting to get better.

"Mother..." Aurelia smiled softly at Astrea as she helped her walk by holding her hand. "You look way healthier..." Her smile widened as she looked at the bandages all over Astrea's arms that were no longer covered in blood since the wounds had begun to dry up.

Astrea put on a gentle smile as she allowed Aurelia to guide her to the couch. However, Aurelia could see in Astrea's smile that something was off about that smile.

"What is it, mother?" Aurelia asked as she sat beside Astrea, still holding her hand.

Astrea placed her other hand on top of Aurelia's and held it tightly. She slowly looked at Aurelia, staring at her eyes back and forth.

"Divine Physician Sima is leaving tomorrow," Astrea answered as she caressed Aurelia's hand.

"What?! Why?! You're not fully healed yet, mother. Why did he decide to leave?!" Aurelia asked, shocked by the news.

Serena chuckled as she placed her finger on her lips, staring into Aurelia's eyes. Aurelia glanced at Serena, knowing what that gesture meant. She closed her eyes, controlling her breathing, and began to think. That gesture was a code that Serena taught her, a gesture to ask her to stop talking and start thinking.

Aurelia slowly opened her eyes and stared into Astrea's eyes. She thought the reason for the Divine Physician Sima would leave even before her mother got treated until she fully recovered. She then looked at the dried wounds underneath the bandages on her mother's arms and neck. She began to see it, the answer that she hoped it wasn't the right one.

"He couldn't treat your wounds anymore, mother?" Aurelia asked in a quiet and calm voice.

"Yes, he tried everything he knew. However, he couldn't heal the wounds, only made them dry up. He said that every time it showed a sign of recovery with the medicine he made, the next morning it wouldn't work anymore," Astrea answered as she nodded her head and began to caress Aurelia's cheek. "He said that he had never seen anything like this. He said that it was as if the universe didn't want me to recover these wounds," she chuckled softly as she averted her gaze.

Aurelia, Serena, and Astrea knew that the wounds were from Astrea's plea to God. She was willing to sacrifice herself in exchange for protecting the lives of the people of South Neva during the final battle against the demons. Her plea got answered, and she had to live the rest of her life with such a condition.

"If God was cruel, your mother wouldn't be here right now," Astrea said as she cupped Aurelia's cheeks.

"Or perhaps it's a punishment from God..." Aurelia pulled away, averting her gaze. "It's a reminder for the lies that this family has kept hidden from the world. The very thing that we wanted to erase from this world..." she muttered, her gaze filled with disgust and anger.

Serena looked at the two of them and it hadn't been the first time those two had acted like that. They were close like mother and daughter, and then they suddenly became distant like strangers.

"Does it matter? Why are you two always talking about God in this matter as if you understand God's intention?" Serena asked, staring at them both with a cold gaze.

Aurelia and Astrea looked at Serena, surprised by what she said. They could see the annoyance in her eyes and a hint of hatred. They had no idea the soul inside Serena was the first woman, the first wife of Adam, Lilith, who was used as an example of greed, arrogance, and disobedience by God to humankind.

"Stop talking about God when to justify everything," Serena said with a serious expression.

Aurelia and Astrea finally realized what they had been saying, and it made them a bit embarrassed. However, they were still shocked that Serena seemed irritated by it, and they didn't expect her to react that way. They began to notice that Serena had never praised God ever since they met her, but she showed compassion and kindness to the people around her.

"You don't like to speak about God, Saint Serena?" Astrea asked, staring Serena in the eyes.

"It's not about I don't like speaking about God, but the question is what for?" Serena asked back as she leaned back and stared at both of them. "Speaking God's name as if I know better or assuming what God likes or doesn't like. If I want to oversimplified things because I said God forbid this and that, what do people learn other than fear?" She added with her arms crossed.

"Don't mention God in front of me when you're using it just to simplify things," Serena said with a stern look on her face.

Aurelia and Astrea were baffled when Serena boldly said something like that. Anyone would call her words blasphemous, a controversy that would be enough to put her on a trial, to be punished severely by believers. Of course, those two could say a few words that would warn Serena, however, they chose not to because the very reason she died a long time ago was no other than because of the Holy Nation who eliminated her out of fear of the end of time's prophecy.

Aurelia looked at her food that had turned cold, and she had lost her appetite. The room was heavy with tension and unspoken words, but then she cleared her throat as she stood up. She walked toward her desk and reached out to the documents in the drawer.

"I'm planning to reveal everything to the world..." Aurelia said as she put the documents on the table. "I'm going to bring out all the things that our family has kept hidden for a hundred years..." She continued with her eyes on the documents.

"I want the world to see how the most holy and sacred place that people believed in hides something so vile and corrupted that it can turn their belief upside-down," Aurelia sighed with her eyes closed. "I'm ready, and there's no better time than now when the world is questioning the Holy Nation," she continued.

Astrea closed her eyes, knowing that it would be the end for the Angelis family and the Holy Nation. She couldn't imagine the faces of the believers, the feeling of betrayal, disgust, anger, and hatred. She had nothing to say, and would steel her heart for what was about to come.

"When are you going to announce it to the world, Aurelia?" Serena asked, staring at Aurelia with a soft gaze. "You know that the moment you reveal everything, you will have nobody to support you, and the demons will gather to take what's theirs," she continued.

Aurelia nodded her head with understanding, knowing exactly the risk and the consequences of revealing everything. She didn't even want to go back down to that secret chamber, to see the evil that the Angelis family had kept hidden. She didn't want to believe that she was born and raised in the Angelis family. She felt nothing but disgrace, shame, and disgust that lingered on her body like a second skin.

"In three weeks..." Aurelia answered as she clenched her fists. "I'm going to invite the world, the nobles, and the royal families to enter this sacred place. I want them to see it with their own eyes. I want them all to be present and three weeks are enough to bring all of them here because I already sent the invitation to them," she continued.

"In that case..." Serena said as she stood up. "I'll prepare on my side," she continued as she walked toward the door.

"Prepare yourself, Saint Serena?" Aurelia furrowed her brows, confused and anxious.

"You'll see," Serene looked over her shoulder with a smile on her face before she left the room.

Chapter 345: Infiltration.

Ayla arrived outside the capital city in the morning and noticed the gate had been reinforced by more guards. She could hear the sound of hammers and the sight of wagons filled with wood and cloth. She immediately removed her cloak and burned it with fire magic before she threw it into one of the wagons.

"Fire! There's a fire!" Ayla shouted with a panicked expression as she pointed at the wagon.

The guards immediately looked toward the screams and saw one of the wagons caught on fire. They hurriedly ran toward the wagon since it was one of the wagons that transported materials for the upcoming ceremony. People tried to put out the fire by slapping the flames with their clothes.

Ayla immediately blended in with the crowd before she moved further away where people couldn't see her in the corner of their eyes. She walked past the gate and saw a few guards that stayed at their posts. She looked down at the pebbles on the ground and immediately kicked a pebble into the wall next to her. The moment it bounced against the wall, she caught it and threw it at the horse's eye from her back.

The horse panicked and began to run past the gate with the wagon attached to its body. The coachman couldn't stop the horse from panicking since the fire and the commotion were enough to make the horse on the edge. The guards had no choice but to catch the horse while Ayla walked into the capital city unnoticed.

Ayla took a deep breath as she watched people set up wooden poles on the sides of the street. People were busy decorating the city for Princess Amarylis's coming-of-age ceremony. Everyone seemed to be in a high-spirit because they loved the Princess for her beauty and personality.

Ayla scanned every corner, face, and item that her eyes could see in front of her without moving her head around. She was sure that nobody was paying attention to her and began to act like the townspeople. She admired the decorations and the hardworking people, greeting them with a smile.

The moment she could move her head around without attracting attention or being seen so suspiciously, she began to memorize everything. She listened and watched the guards talk, planning to block the alleys to prevent intruders from moving freely during the ceremony. She then looked at the royal knights being instructed by their captain on which streets they were going to patrol.

Ayla gathered so much valuable information while acting like an ordinary woman taking a stroll in the city. She then glanced at a woman with her little girl, cheering her father, who was busy setting up the pole. She looked at the empty wicker basket on top of a barrel that belonged to the woman, and immediately took it away.

She pretended to buy fruits and vegetables so she could stay there without looking like a suspicious person. She kept listening to the guards and the royal knights as she ate the apple she bought and walked around the street.

"It's so lively right now. I mean, this city is already lively, but with the upcoming ceremony, this city won't be sleeping in the next few weeks," the merchant said to Ayla when she was busy looking at the vegetables that the merchant sold.

"Yes, everyone is happy to see our Princess become an adult and become someone that can change the world into a better place," Ayla answered with a soft smile as she focused her hearing on the guards and the royal knights still.

"You're not from here, aren't you? I have never seen your face before," the merchant asked as he looked at Ayla's face.

"No, I came here two days ago with my father. He's a merchant and he's supplying woods for the ceremony, and we decided to stay here for a few more days to see everyone decorate the city," Ayla answered as she looked around, pretending to be amazed and in awe by the people who were busy working.

"Ah, you did the right thing, missy. This place is going to be more lively the closer we are from the ceremony," the merchant grinned as he nodded in agreement.

Ayla hummed in agreement with a smile on her face.

"Oh, do you know anything about that weird and creepy man wearing jester attire? I saw him when I came here with my father two days ago," Ayla asked with her brows furrowed.

The merchant's face immediately turned into disgust when Ayla mentioned the Jester. He crossed his arms as he looked down at the street, hoping that the Jester wasn't around before he spoke about him.

"Don't bother about him, missy. He has a screw loose in his head, and he does nothing but to piss people off. The worst part, he enjoys getting beaten, a freak even among the freaks," the merchant answered, feeling a chill down his spine when he talked about the Jester.

"But why is he still here? Why don't the guards just kick him out of the city?" Ayla tilted her head.

"That's the problem, missy. That Jester didn't do anything wrong or broke any laws. And I hate to admit, all his poems are beautiful, but when he's not in his right mind? He begins to spout nonsense," the merchant answered with a deep sigh. "And the craziest part is the fact guards couldn't catch him when they tried to arrest him. He moved like an eel, so slippery and disappeared into some dark holes," he continued as he checked his goods, making sure no flies laid eggs on his vegetables and fruits.

Ayla raised her brows, finding that information to be valuable.

"If he knows the city really well, does that mean he's a local?" Ayla asked as she took a bite of the apple.

"I don't know about that, missy. We are all curious about that as well, because he's been roaming around here as long as we all remember," the merchant answered, shaking his head. "He could be a local, but we don't even know who that man is," he continued with a shrug.

Ayla found the Jester to be an intriguing person, and the fact her Lord, Rasmus seen the Jester as an asset, it explained everything. She was amazed by Rasmus's ability to see in people, and always took an interest in any individual that people might have tried to avoid.

"Where can I find him?" Ayla asked as she looked down the street, checking if the Jester was around.

"Miss, are you really that interested in that Jester?" The merchant looked at Ayla with a slight frown on his face. "Well, I have to admit that he's an interesting guy. If you want to find him, he's usually at the town square in the morning, and if you can't find him there, he should be on the east side of the city. Ask the people there and they will know where to find that Jester since a lot of people there like him," he informed as he pointed at the town square in the far distance and to the east.

"Thank you, I'll go and find him now," Ayla smiled at the merchant. "Oh, the apple tastes really sweet and juicy. You have a high-quality fruits here," she complimented as she looked at the merchant's goods.

"Of course! Please come again if you want the best fruit in the city. You know where to find me," the merchant grinned as he smacked his chest proudly.

Ayla chuckled softly as she nodded and then left.

After Ayla walked quite far, she spotted a beggar who seemed to have lost his place because of the upcoming ceremony. She approached the beggar and dropped the basket, loud enough for the beggar to hear. When the beggar turned around, he saw fruits and vegetables in the basket, and when he looked around, he didn't find anyone. He immediately picked it up and hurriedly ate the fruits and the vegetables with tears in his eyes.

Ayla walked in a dark alley, changing her attire before she burned her previous attire, leaving no trace of smoke or even the remains of her attire. As soon as she walked out on the other side of the street, she acted like a completely different person, not the daughter of a merchant, but just a random pedestrian.

The moment she reached the town square, it was crowded with people who were busy setting up the tents. She knew that the Jester wouldn't be there because of how hectic it was, and as a Jester, he would love attention, but this place wouldn't give him that. She immediately went to the east side of the city, as the merchant had said, as she counted the number of guards and royal knights that were roaming around the city.

When Ayla set foot on the east side of the city, she found it oddly peaceful. It wasn't as crowded and lively as the previous places she had passed. The people seemed to be less energetic about the upcoming ceremony. She immediately acted similarly to those that she saw, walking at a slow pace and with a stoic expression. However, when she was about to wonder where the Jester might be, she saw him, standing still in the middle of the street, singing and playing a lute in his hands.

Ayla slowly closed the distance as she listened to the melody and the beautiful voice of a man whom people call a madman. She listened, and even chanted by the melody, however, the Jester strung the string quite harshly so that it snapped her back to reality. She was confused until she saw the Jester slowly turning his head toward her, staring right into her eyes as if he knew who she was.

"Who are you..." The Jester giggled mischievously, grinning so widely as he kept staring into Ayla's eyes.

Chapter 346: Terrorizing.

"I'm just a merchant..." Ayla answered as she took a few steps back.

Ayla was surprised and shocked by how perceptive the Jester was. She looked around and saw that people were ignoring him and the whole situation. She realized the moment she paid attention to him, he knew that she wasn't from around here. The fact that she was the only one who paid attention to him, it was a giveaway of who she was.

"A merchant? At that age?" The Jester tilted his head, taking a huge step toward Ayla, grinning and staring at her. "Are you telling a lie or a lie?" He added as he giggled and kept taking huge steps toward her.

"I'm telling the truth, I got here two days ago with my father. I saw you when we came here, and I was just curious about you," Ayla answered as she walked backward, staring at the Jester with fear in her eyes and in her voice. "I'll get going, I'm sorry..." she said as she turned around and walked at a fast pace.

Although Ayla was pretending to be a scared woman, the anxiety and the crippling fear from encountering the Jester slowly became reality.

She began to walk even faster, trying to avoid the Jester, and when she took a glance over her shoulder, that was when her face became pale. The Jester was following right behind her with a huge grin and eyes wide open. She was raised and taught by the best, and yet she didn't notice his presence at all if she didn't turn around.

"Ahhh!" Ayla screamed so loudly to attract the people around her. She didn't know if her scream was an act of if it was the real her. She collapsed and covered her head with her arms, begging, "I'm so sorry! I'm so sorry!"

Ayla could hear a soft giggle that suddenly faded out, and when she slowly pulled her arms down, the Jester was nowhere to be found. People were looking at her with a stoic expression, knowing exactly what had happened but choosing not to interfere.

She was breathing heavily as she looked around, making sure the Jester wasn't around or hiding. She slowly got up and kept looking around with anxiety because she didn't like it when she couldn't sense or

find the Jester at all. She realized that the Jester wasn't an ordinary person, and the way he moved unnoticed by her, it disturbed her more than it should.

She decided to leave and never looked back, her steps were faster than before. She had never felt so scared in her life like that, and somehow that Jester could pull the strings of emotions within her and chose to pull the fear out of her. So many questions appeared in her head, but one thing that she had to keep in mind, and that was to keep a distance from the Jester.

After a long walk, Ayla decided to blend in with the crowd because it made her feel secure and safe. She tried to calm her racing heart that had been going on for minutes. She couldn't help but glance at every corner because she felt like the Jester was following her. She didn't know if she was being paranoid or if her gut told her that it was the truth.

The sun was slowly setting down, and Ayla managed to calm her thoughts. She decided to find an inn to stay in for the night and continued her mission to keep an eye on the Jester. Her thought was in a jumble, and she doubted that the Jester would be in any danger with that skill he had.

Deep down, she felt reluctant to do this after she found out how unnerving and disturbing the Jester was. However, it was Rasmus's order, and she didn't want to disappoint him, especially when the Jester didn't try to harm, which didn't put her in any danger, only discomfort. She spent the night in the room she rented and stared out at the people working tirelessly on the street.

The night was filled with the sound of people talking and the sound of hammers outside the inn that calmed Ayla down. She slowly drifted off to sleep, but not long after that, heavy rain poured into the capital city. People decided to postpone the work and continued the work in the morning because of the heavy rain and the rumbling thunder.

In the middle of the night where the rain became heavier, Ayla was sleeping so soundly on the bed. The window was still open, and that was when a shadow of a head came down from the top frame of the window. The sound of thunder and the flashes of lightning revealed the Jester's face, upside-down with a huge grin on his face, staring at her sleeping face.

The wind pushed the shutters widely, hitting the wall that caused Ayla to open her eyes. She immediately jolted from her bed and looked out the window, but the Jester had disappeared, unaware of his existence that had been staring at her while she was asleep. She didn't know it was raining outside and chose to close the shutters and the window before she went back to sleep.

The morning came, and the people continued to work, even though it was drizzling outside. Ayla also chose to walk, to keep her head clear as she tried to think of the right way to observe the Jester. She had decided that she didn't want to get too close to the Jester no matter what happened.

Ayla went to the east side of the city once again, and with every step she took, she felt heavier in her chest and on her shoulders. It was her instinct telling her to turn around and leave, but she ignored her feelings and emotions. She tried to think of something else, and the only thing that could keep her mind sharp was Rasmus and his words.

"He's an asset for Lord Rasmus, keep it together..." Ayla muttered to herself as she walked on the sidewalk and observed the people in front of her and the alleys around her.

"You little liar..." A hush voice could be heard from the alley that Ayla had just passed with a soft giggle that echoed.

Ayla felt every hair on her body raised and the cold creeping into her skin from her heels up to her nape. She slowly turned around and looked at the alley where she heard the voice, the Jester's voice. She unconsciously placed her left hand on her back, pulling down the dagger she had hidden under her left sleeve.

"Why do you call me a liar?" Ayla asked, and she raised her voice to let go of the fear that had accumulated in her throat.

There was only silence for a few seconds after Ayla asked that question. However, she didn't get a reply, so she decided to approach the alley, still with her left hand behind her back. When she took a peek at the alley, she found nobody, there was nothing in the dark alley. She gulped, thinking if she was hallucinating or did she really hear the Jester's voice.

Ayla decided to walk on the other side of the street as she kept her eyes on the alley and her surroundings.

"Because you said you were here with your father, but I didn't see your father nor any companion with you..." The jester answered, giggling from the alley in front of her.

Ayla was in disbelief that the Jester had managed to move from one side of the street to the other without her realizing it. She began to question if the Jester was a human or not because there was no way that someone could move that fast and unnoticed by her. However, that wasn't the main issue, she was anxious because she didn't expect the Jester was indeed had been following her and keeping an eye on her, revealing her lies that she was a merchant and came to the city with a nonexistent father figure.

"Who are you, little miss?" The Jester asked, but his voice was fading away as if he was no longer there.

"I'm just a nobody... and I don't mean any harm to you..." Ayla answered truthfully as she slowly walked toward the alley. "I can promise you that..." She added and took a peek at the dark alley, and to her expectation, the Jester was nowhere to be found there.

Ayla looked up at the walls of the building, wondering if the Jester had climbed the walls and then jumped from one building to another. She realized it would be the case when she paid attention to the dark alley across the street earlier, when the Jester jumped to another building across the street. She immediately turned around, and she found the Jester in the middle of the street, playing a song on his lute.

Ayla's heart was beating so fast when she stared at the Jester as if nothing had happened. She clenched her fists, feeling irritated when she was being played by the Jester and it worked really well.

"Who are you, Mister?" Ayla asked as she approached the Jester, and this time, there was something else that made her fear feel less threatening, and that was curiosity and the sense of safety and relief after telling the truth to the person who could see it.

"I'm just a guy, playing a lute," the Jester answered with a big smile on his face. "And who are you, little miss?" He asked.

"I'm a girl who wants to see you," Ayla answered.

"And here I am, in the flesh," the Jester responded with a giggle as he tuned the lute.

Chapter 347: Chaos vs Order.

Ayla decided to keep following the Jester, roaming around the street aimlessly. She had to admit that the Jester had a beautiful voice, melodies, and poems just like what the merchant said. Some of the people paid attention to him, giving him compliments, and even gave him fruits of food out of appreciation for the art.

The Jester wasn't always creepy and menacing, he could be nice, really nice to people. He put a genuine smile of joy toward the people who appreciated his work. He also could have a normal conversation with people, which shocked Ayla.

"How long are you going to follow me around, little Miss?" The Jester tilted his head, approaching Ayla, who was sitting on the bench. "You're not here to appreciate my work, at least not as your main purpose," he chuckled mischievously as he stood in front of her.

It had only been a few hours of following the Jester, and she was no longer feeling scared of him. She found him normal in a sense when she didn't show any hostility or ill intention toward him.

"I'm here to keep an eye on you," Ayla answered as she looked up at the Jester. "But I'm not working for the people who want to harm you in any way or have any motive..." she explained as she shook her hands.

The Jester began to dance silently, a silly dance and yet it seemed flawless. Ayla couldn't help but watch with both fascination and discomfort. She had never encountered someone like him, even a madman would have been less absurd and more predictable.

The Jester suddenly stopped spinning around and lifted one leg upward. His torso was hanging sideways while his right hand reached the toes of his leg that were above him.

"Ahh! That brown skin man with the beautiful lady beside him are the ones who sent you here, aren't they?" The Jester grinned widely, still in the same position.

Ayla didn't need to ask who those were and already knew they were Rasmus and Aris. She knew those two had changed their appearances to hide their real identities from the demon cults and demons. She didn't know if she should answer with the truth or not, but she knew there was no point in lying because she had given enough hints.

"Yes, he's my Master," Ayla answered as she nodded her head. "My Master said that you're an asset, and he entrusted me to keep an eye on you and to protect you if needed," she continued as she looked at the Jester's eyes.

"I see!" The Jester suddenly raised his voice and jumped up high. "So he made sure I'm safe and sound!" He flipped and landed on both hands, doing a handstand as he laughed manically.

Ayla was shocked by the sheer strength, flexibility, and endurance of the Jester's body. She would be able to do something like that, but she wouldn't find it comfortable unlike the Jester who seemed fine.

"How nice of him, but I'm fine even without having someone to look after me..." The Jester giggled mischievously, pulling one hand away from the ground, allowing him to do a one-hand hand stand. "But I appreciate the thoughtfulness," he laughed as he began to spin around like a slow propeller.

Ayla wanted to ask about the encounter between the Jester and Rasmus, but she knew her boundaries. However, she remembered what Rasmus said, about the meaning of her life. She knew that Rasmus wanted her to be more than a blind loyalty follower or a tool. She thought if it was the time for her to be herself for once.

"What did my Master say to you, Mister? Are you close with him?" Ayla asked.

The Jester stopped spinning, his back facing Ayla until he slowly turned his head around, staring at her from the upside-down.

"Little Miss, are you sure you're allowed to speak of such a thing behind your Master's permission?" The Jester asked with his head tilted.

"No, but he encouraged me to be more than just a tool..." Ayla answered hesitantly, lowering her head.

The Jester grinned, and immediately pushed himself up before he landed on his feet. He spread his arms as if he was waiting for some recognition or a simple ovation from his act. However, he lowered his arms and put them behind his back when there was nobody clapping their hands.

"What a considerate Master of yours. Well, I already can tell that he's not the type to enjoy holding power over someone's life," the Jester said as he pulled out a flute out of his sleeve.

"Yes, I believe so too..." Ayla smiled softly as she nodded in agreement.

The Jester began to play the flute as he walked away without saying a word. Ayla was curious why the Jester had suddenly decided to walk away. However, when she was about to get up from the bench to follow him, the Jester raised his right hand and clenched it.

Ayla tilted her head and furrowed her brows because that gesture was meant to stop her from following him. She knew that was meant for her, but why the Jester wanted her to not follow him. She then looked around and noticed there were guards walking out of the corner that were patrolling the street. She immediately pretended to act normal by staring at the sky with a distant gaze.

The Jester began to perform with his flute, attracting everyone's attention with the beautiful melody. She knew that she had talked long enough with him, and she decided to find something to eat and gather more information about the situation in the city for the upcoming ceremony.

The Jester kept playing with the flute with his eyes closed until he slightly opened his left eye. He glanced at the bench and he didn't find Ayla there, and she had disappeared without a trace. He then decided to continue his performance without anyone paying any attention to him.

Ayla was hiding in a dark alley with her eyes wide open. She looked terrified when she glanced at the street, she was shocked when she saw it. She slowly took a peek at the street and saw the carriage going further and toward the Jester.

"(I have to report this to my Lord...)" Ayla thought and hurriedly walked out of the alley and went to the inn she was staying in.

The Jester was playing the flute when he suddenly felt immense pressure. He opened his eyes when a carriage moved past him, and he accidentally saw the people inside it. He saw a man, wearing an all-white robe with a hood that covered his face. Based on the appearance, he knew it was the man who had been referred to as the Folk Saint, the Blessed, Nemu.

The Jester closed his eyes and continued playing, without thinking much about it. However, he couldn't stop shuddering because the immense pressure on his body lingered. He didn't know what had happened, and it made him a bit nauseous as if his head was being squeezed and spun around violently.

The Jester watched the carriage move toward the palace, and it made him stare at it with a cold gaze. He slowly put down the flute he was playing and hid it under his sleeve before he walked into a dark alley and disappeared.

The carriage arrived at the palace with a lot of royal knights standing on the sides. The king's envoy came out of the palace and stood in front of the carriage door, waiting to greet Nemu. The moment the carriage door opened, everyone lowered their heads, including the royal knights.

"Welcome to this humble place, Oh, the Blessed one..." The king's envoy bowed his head. "His Highness is waiting for you inside. I'll escort you to the throne room, Your Holiness."

Nemu nodded his head slowly, still with the hood on, hiding his face. However, anyone could see the pale face and the sharp jaw of his, wondering how handsome his face was. Rumors said that his face was that of an angel, whoever looked at him would lose their minds.

Nemu entered the throne room, and immediately everyone was ordered to leave the room. Nemu was alone with the royal family, and all of them immediately moved to the side as the king pointed at the throne.

Nemu approached the throne, but then he stopped before he could step on the small steps toward the throne. He turned his head toward a young lady with bright blonde hair. He slowly walked toward her and placed his hand with a white glove on, on the lady's head.

"You'll become an adult soon. Is there any wish you want, Princess?" Nemu asked, his voice was beautiful soft and soothing.

Amarylis was overjoyed when she heard Nemu's words. A wish that would be granted by none other than a powerful being. She immediately went down to her knees and pressed her head against the carpet.

"This humble servant doesn't know what I want yet. I can't think of anything..." Amarylis answered.

Nemu chuckled softly, his chuckle putting everyone at ease and giving them peace of mind. He then nodded with understanding and decided to walk to the throne.

"Please, tell me what you want in the future if there's something you want, Princess," Nemu said as he sat down on the throne and rested his arms on the armrests.

Amarylis nodded her head as she slowly got up, still with her head lowered.

"Now, tell me why you want to see me, King Relius," Nemu asked, staring at the man wearing a crown.

Relius went down to one knee with his head lowered.

"There are so many things that will pique your interest, Lord Nemu..." Relius answered as he lifted his head to look at Nemu.

Chapter 348: Loyal followers.

"My Lord, I have been so eager to show you this..." Relius said as he offered a letter to Nemu, the letter being placed above his head like a servant.

Nemu looked down at the letter and saw the Holy Nation seal on it. He slowly reached out and took the letter from Relius's hand, intrigued by the content of the letter. He slowly and carefully opened the seal before he pulled out the letter inside.

There was only silence in the massive throne room but the sound of paper rustling on the glove. Nemu silently read the invitation letter from Aurelia to King Relius. He didn't expect that the Holy Nation was bold enough to bring guests into the inner layer of the Holy Nation.

"In three weeks, that would be on the same day of your daughter's birthday," Nemu said as he folded the letter and placed it back in the envelope. "How are you going to do that?" He asked.

"This humble servant will stay here, My Lord. I believe, My Lord can pretend to become this lowly servant and go to the Holy Nation as me," Relius answered, lowering his head.

"That's not a bad idea, King Relius. I'll gratefully accept your offer," Nemu said in a soft voice as he crossed his legs and stared down at the queen, Amarylis, and her two younger siblings.

"Oh, My Lord! Your words are wasted on someone like me!" Relius bowed down, and then everyone else also bowed down their heads to the ground at Nemu.

"What else do you have for me, King Relius?" Nemu looked down at Relius as he stored the invitation letter under his sleeve.

Relius began to report on the growth of the cult's members. With the Holy Nation losing its power and influence gradually, more and more nobles fell to the hands of the demonic cult. Wealth, influence, and power those cult members had were multiplied because of the deep connection, slowly ruling over Central Neva.

Nemu listened to Relius's report, and there was no reaction on his face. He seemed to be careless about growth since he already established a few of the royal families and high-ranking nobles. It was indeed because of Holy Nation who had lost its power and influence.

"There are people who appear to be vassals from the Asghar family, My Lord. They came here and wanted to attend my daughter's coming-of-age ceremony. I'm wondering if they're our people?" Relius asked with hesitation, his gaze glued to the ground.

"What are their names?" Nemu asked, tilting his head.

"Lord Vije, Lady Sira, and Lady Lurein, My Lord. I did a bit of research about these names, but I didn't find any information related to them. However, they have the seal of the Asghar family, which validates their status..." Relius answered, lowering his head even further.

Nemu rested his head on his fist with a distant gaze pointed at the door. He never heard those names, however, he also didn't know much about the families in Neva as his job was to bring chaos to the world. He didn't care much about mere human names, but he knew it was necessary.

"The Asghar family... I believe my brethren have a connection with them, but only through one of the children. There are plenty of them, so they could be connected to us or not," Nemu answered as he looked at the sunlight through the stained glass. "Why does it matter who they are? It's your daughter's coming-of-age ceremony, and you have enough demons to keep you safe here," he asked, staring down at Relius.

"Yes, My Lord. I believe these people might have known something about us. Should we be worried, My Lord?" Relius asked with a hint of worry in his voice.

Nemu thought for a moment, remembering that Rasmus had been oddly quiet ever since his arrival in Central Neva. He heard about what had happened from Yaza and Kiel, and he had anticipated Rasmus making a scene, and yet there was nothing.

"Rasmus Blackheart is nowhere to be found. The last sighting of him was in the Spring Forest," Nemu said as he slowly got up from the throne. "Yes, you should be worried even if he's not around. He has a deep grudge against humankind, especially this nation. I'll send a few more powerful demons to protect you and your family," he added as he walked past Relius and down the steps.

"Thank you, My Lord! Thank you!" Relius bowed his head repeatedly at Nemu. "I will bring the items now..." he said, and then looked at his wife, signaling her to bring it to Nemu.

Nemu watched Relius's wife walk toward the table where a big jewelry box sat on top of it. The wife hurriedly walked back with the jewelry box in her hands and offered it to him.

Nemu carefully opened the box and saw a big blood-red ruby inside. A ruby that was as big as his big palm, glowing when it basked in the sunlight. He carefully lifted it above his head and looked at it thoroughly.

"My late brother managed to keep it hidden and safe during the rebellion that the Blackheart family did. We also have filled it with more souls in the past decade, My Lord. We don't know how many souls there are inside it, but we are sure it should be more than a hundred thousand of the finest and purest souls," Relius stood behind Nemu with his head lowered.

Nemu hummed, and suddenly the atmosphere in the throne room became tense. Everyone began to tremble in fear as their knees became weak and collapsed to the floor. It was suffocating enough that their lungs felt like being squeezed the air out of them.

"Yes... this is sufficient..." Nemu's voice was no longer soft and gentle. His voice became haunting-almost. "This is indeed a precious gem," he said under his heavy breath

"My... Lord..." Relius said under his shaky breath.

Nemu glanced at Relius and his family, realizing that he had unconsciously released his power. He immediately sucked his demonic energy so that only he could see it, the amount of demonic energy that he oozed was almost like a sea of darkness in the throne room. He almost killed Satan's loyal followers.

"You have done a great service, King Relius and all your ancestors along with your lovely family..." Nemu said as he turned around storing the gem under his sleeve. "Name me one wish, and I will grant you what you want," he looked down at Relius and his family who were still on the ground, catching their breaths.

"We want power, My Lord... we want to be invincible. Make my sons to become the strongest warriors in this world, and give my daughter an eternal beauty..." Relius answered, bowing down.

"Hmm, that's not a problem," Nemu lifted his left hand and pointed it at Relius's children.

Demonic energy came out of his fingers and entered the children's bodies. They didn't feel a thing, not even a slight tingle on their bodies. He then glanced at Relius and his wife, giving them the same amount of demonic energy into their bodies.

"Done, your children will become the face of the future," Nemu said as he lowered his left hand. "And you two will become eternally healthy. No sickness, no curse, nothing could harm you, not even the sharpest blade," he added as he put his hands behind his back.

Their eyes lit up as they began to bow their heads down to the ground repeatedly. They were all thanking Nemu and showing how grateful they were nonstop. Nemu didn't care about their words since they were just expendables and tools.

"I will take my leave, you don't need to see me off," Nemu said as he walked away. His footsteps and the sound of soft clothes brushing against each other echoed the throne room.

Relius and his family kept bowing their heads as Nemu left the room.

Nemu walked in the spacious hallway where he was surrounded by windows with the view of beautiful gardens on both sides. Every step he took, he saw a reflection of a shadow on the window, and slowly but surely, there were two of the shadows in the reflection.

"Seeing you two here, that's rare..." Nemu said as he kept walking.

"Something happened..." A soft demonic voice was heard like a breeze of wind.

"A surge of power was released, a power that surpasses us," another demonic voice was heard, but this time from a different direction.

"You mean from the Spring Forest? We already know that," Nemu responded as he kept walking, and saw the servants running away when they saw him walking.

"No, this happens a week ago," the first demonic voice answered.

Nemu suddenly stopped moving, and his gaze was cold and distant so suddenly.

"Where?" Nemu asked.

"The Trivula Forest," the second demonic voice answered.

"Ah, that place..." Nemu glanced over his shoulder. "Since we got this gem, should we go and visit that place now?" He asked.

The shadowy figures in the reflections whispered into Nemu's ears that sounded like a soft whistle before they all disappeared into thin air. Nemu stood there for a moment, his gaze cold and empty before he began to walk again.

Chapter 349: Under the chin.

It had been two weeks since then, and Rasmus had received the four invitation letters that he had requested from Viscount Heward. Rasmus, Aris, Rullein, and Yur decided to move to the capital city, and

their presence had become well-known even by the townspeople. The rumors had spread across the Referus Kingdom and the neighboring nations thanks to the Merchant Guild and Gorge.

The Black Hands had gathered in the capital city, and their hiding locations were different from each other, spreading across the city like a massive web. However, they had failed to gather any information related to the five people that Rasmus had assigned them to investigate. Belvia Sottol, Jacques Coreu, Francesco Sorza, William Shecil, Mirelda Norbridge, and Meredith Seriche, they were like ghosts of the past, non-existent in history.

"So they're indeed demons," Aris said as she looked at the reports in her hands.

Rasmus glanced at the reports and he didn't seem to be interested in those anymore since there was barely any information. He had expected those six names that were listed in the invited guests weren't humans. He knew that it would be pointless to investigate about them when the time he had left was a week before the coming-of-age ceremony.

"Were they from that place..." Aris muttered to herself.

"What place?" Rasmus looked at Aris, who was sitting beside him at the counter.

"Beyond the Blackcliffs, there was a civilization there before," Aris answered as she put down the reports and slid them to Rasmus, giving them back.

Rasmus had heard the story from Aris, Lenin, and the others about their expedition to hunt the False Prophet, Ermaine beyond the Blackcliffs. The place where the world chose to forget where its history was long forgotten. There was no records related to the civilization beyond the Blackcliffs, there was no records as to why beyond the Blackcliffs had become a taboo, a place to meet an end of oneself.

"You don't know anything about it?" Rasmus asked.

Aris looked at Rasmus, thinking whether she should tell him or not about the origins of civilization beyond the Blackcliffs. She then glanced at the journal in Rasmus's hand, he had already read the journal half way, and ever since he had kept himself busy with the record, his behavior seemed to have changed a bit more than before.

"I'll let you read that journal first. Who knows, maybe your father might have found out the truth about Blackcliffs," Aris answered as she pointed at the journal in Rasmus's hands.

Rasmus looked down at the journal, his distant gaze when he stared at it. He read how his father failed to notice everything that had happened around him. He read how a man was losing his sanity slowly, drained from all the horror, the suspicions, the fear, the anxiety that kept gnawing at him from his feet that had reached to his throat. He was surprised that his father managed to keep himself sane after years of chasing demonic cults that he didn't even know if they truly existed or not.

"He was still chasing something he was uncertain if it really existed or not. He went from one continent to the other, leaving and neglecting the Blackheart's estate and affairs. He was being used, but he had no choice," Rasmus answered as he kept his distant gaze at the journal. "However, we gained a lot of information. The possible culprits behind these events, the allies of King Fredrick from different continents, the demon worshippers," he continued.

"No wonder the Blackheart family is well-known around the world. So we know which royal families and which nations could possibly be vassals for the Fallen Watchers," Aris responded and took a sip of her wine.

"Yes, it narrows down the search," Rasmus nodded in agreement. "But I'm not sure if this journal will reveal anything related to the Blackwall, Aris," he looked at her with a stoic and cold expression.

Aris stared at the wall in front of her before she put down the glass and faced Rasmus.

"The Blackcliffs and the civilization that existed there, they were from a thousand years ago or even older than that," Aris said, glancing at Rullein teasing Yur in its little kid form, poking and tickling Yur as she pleased. "I don't know the details, nor did the elders care so much about it. But that civilization was the time where they hunted us Orthias down," she revealed.

Rasmus raised his brows, and finally found one of the missing pieces that had happened in the past. The Neva world was ten times bigger than Earth, and the area behind the Blackcliffs covered a quarter of Neva. With that being said, the civilization that existed beyond the Blackcliffs was still twice as large as the whole Earth.

"Nobody knew about the history behind that civilization?" Rasmus furrowed his brows, finding it weird that no Orthias cared about it at all, about the history behind their dark time.

"There is, Sanya," Aris answered and took a sip of her wine. "She has all the answers to every question that you want to know," she added.

Rasmus hummed as he put down the journal, and then turned around to look at Yur. Yur had existed longer than Aris, and Yur should have known about the event that caused Orthias to be on the brink of extinction.

"Yur, can you come here for a moment?" Rasmus turned around to look at Yur, who was being teased by Rullein, powerless and terrified.

When Yur realized that Rasmus needed Yur, Yur changed into an owl and flew away from Rullein. Yur landed on Aris's lap, seeking comfort after the terrifying moment with Rullein. Aris smiled softly as she wrapped her arms around Yur's fluffy body and caressed Yur's head.

"The Blackcliffs, what kind of civilization did they have back then?" Rasmus asked, looking at Yur, who closed its eyes from the comfort Aris gave to Yur.

"They were the most terrifying human beings that have ever existed in this world," Yur answered without hesitation.

Rasmus didn't expect those words to come out as the first answer that Yur would say. However, the way Yur said it, the look in its eyes, and how Yur showed a hint of terror were intriguing.

"Rasmus, what kind of human beings do you think they were, to be able to hunt down Orthias? Beings like Orthias were above human capabilities and power, and yet they could..." Yur asked, staring into Rasmus eyes.

Rasmus had pondered that for a year after he read the history of humankind and the Orthias race back then in the Magic Tower. He remembered the book he read, the title was The End of a Saga by E.B. He didn't know much about Orthias and how strong they were back then, but now that he knew, it was indeed a question that he would ask.

He questioned how his mother, Aristoria could be defeated by humans even though she was an Aristoria. However, the answer was revealed that she gave more than half of her life and power to him, and then used another half to Rullein, making her closer to human power.

"So humans were stronger back then?" Rasmus asked with his brows raised.

"Stronger because Orthias were the ones who taught them how to live. They were taught how to understand magic, to gain strength, and knowledge about this world. They were the first civilization of humankind," Yur answered, nibbling on Aris's hands to show affection and comfort.

Rasmus glanced at Aris, and she wore the usual stoic expression. She then nodded her head, validating Yur's words since she knew that much. However, she didn't know much more about the first civilization nor did she care about it.

"Still, they were capable of killing them?" Rasmus furrowed his brows because the numbers didn't add up with the result.

"Do you know about the first Saint?" Yur asked, tilting its owl's head and staring into Rasmus's eyes.

Rasmus remembered in the book that the first Saint was the beginning of humankind's revolt against Orthias. They were brainwashed by the Saint and turned against the race that had taught them everything. That Saint's name was never revealed by the author, and it remained a mystery.

"I don't know the name of the Saint, but I read the Saint was the beginning of era where humans chose to fight against Orthias," Rasmus answered as he tapped his fingers on the counter. "Do you know who the first Saint was?" He looked at Yur with his eyes narrowed.

"Yes, Urius Zevrathi," Yur answered and hooted.

The moment Zevrathi's name was mentioned, Rasmus's eyes widened and his brows raised. He straightened his back and slowly faced his body toward Yur. He had been looking for that answer, but he never thought the one who knew the answer had been close to him.

"You know about Zevrathi all this time?" Rasmus furrowed his brows.

"But you never asked..." Yur lowered its head.

"Right..." Rasmus said under his breath, realizing he had been keeping that to himself.

"You should get some rest from that journal, you look different," Aris said as she stared into Rasmus's eyes. "You have been spacing out in the past two weeks, and you need to focus on what's ahead of us now," she continued.

Rasmus hummed as he looked at the journal, realizing that deep down, he was affected by it. He didn't know if it was an interesting journal, or if it was because his Rasmus Blackheart soul was the reason he became so attached and emotional to the journal.

"You're right..." Rasmus nodded and stored the journal in the spatial ring. "Let's focus on preparing the stage for our Jester," he said as he got up.

Chapter 350: The plan.

Rasmus gathered five of the Black Hands into the inn that he rented the whole inn for himself. He didn't need to gather all the Black Hands to avoid being spotted. Everyone was looking standing in a circle while he stood in the middle with the table in front of him. Everyone looked at the map, a blueprint of the palace with already a few drawings that the Black Hands had drew for him. There were three layers of walls before anyone could enter the palace area.

"We are assuming the numbers of royal knights would be around 200 scattered around the palace, My Lord," Erdinand said as he stood beside Rasmus and pointed at the map. "There would be around 500 or more outside the palace, preventing anyone from entering the palace without any invitation," he pointed at the outer walls.

"Is that an issue for all of you?" Rasmus asked as he looked at the blueprint, imagining and remembering the structure and the pattern of the palace.

"No, My Lord..." Erdinand pulled the map from the stack of blueprints. He pulled out a map of the capital city. "We have planned everything to make it fail-safe. We will be scattered all over the city, from here... Here... Here... And here..." He pointed at the map. "We will infiltrate the palace from those sides. Even there are a few blind spots and lightly guarded spot of the walls," he continued.

"What about the guards?" Rasmus asked with his arms crossed.

"There are at least 1,000 guards that are patrolling the city, My Lord," Joshua answered and made circular motions at certain areas that had been heavily guarded by the guards. "But that won't be a problem for us, My Lord. We managed to open the old secret passages into the palace. Some of us will infiltrate from the ground and the rest of us will infiltrate from underground," he added.

Rasmus looked at both the maps on the table with a focused gaze. The others were staring at him, waiting for his next words or questions.

"What are the issues?" Rasmus asked as he looked at them.

"The elite royal knights, the King's Swords," Herman answered, his finger pointed at the palace. "It would be impossible that we could take them down silently. I have encountered one of them, once. It was a losing fight for me," he revealed.

Rasmus looked at the scar on Herman's face, and without even needing to ask, Herman nodded. Herman revealed the scar on his face was the result of the fight with the King's Sword. Rasmus didn't know much about the combat skills of the Black Hands, but he knew enough that they were elite among the elite.

"That's not an issue for you," Rasmus shook his head. "Anyone inside the palace is my responsibility. All you have to do is occupy the outside area of the palace. Keeping the people inside and prevent anyone from coming into the palace when the time comes," he continued as he stared at the map.

"Assume that your plan will be jeopardized, what will you do?" Rasmus asked, resting his hands on the table.

"We will sacrifice our lives to make sure you succeed in eliminating the royal family, My Lord. We have no other wish but to avenge the death of the Blackheart family," Herman answered without hesitation or any hint of fear. "We will fight the demons, if we have to, and we won't regret a thing because we have secured all the records and you have possessed everything that we had protected for more than a decade," he added with his head lowered.

"No," Rasmus shook his head, rubbing his thumb against the spatial ring in his middle finger.

Ferdinand and the others looked at Rasmus with their brows raised.

"Let them come. I have a message to convey to them, at least to Nemu," Rasmus said, looking at them with a serious expression. "Let the demons come because their purpose isn't to eliminate the threat, but to protect the royal family. Once I'm inside the palace, your job is basically over, and retreat once your life is in danger. That's an order," he said with a stern look.

All of them lowered their heads, understanding the order and would do what was told.

"What are the other issues?" Rasmus asked.

Aris and Rullein were on the second floor inside a room as their eyes were staring out the window. They were checking if the demons had spotted them or if they were being observed. It was late at night, and the amount of demons that were observing them kept increasing.

"It wasn't this heavy when Rasmus and I came here last time," Aris said, noticing the amount of demonic energy that had become thicker and more suffocating.

"Humans are so hungry for power, aren't they?" Rullein said under her breath as she stared right into a man in a cloak hundreds of meters away from the inn, seeing the nose of the man and the glowing red eyes of his. "Funny, that they believe they can escape from those demons when what await them in the end is an eternal damnation and suffering," she continued.

"You're talking about hell?" Aris asked, glancing at Rullein.

"Do you want to see?" Rullein asked, offering her left hand to Aris.

"Hell?" Aris looked at Rullein's hand.

"What else?" Rullein tilted her head, smirking at Aris. "It's fine if you're a coward, no need to take my hand," she mocked her as she chuckled mischievously.

Aris gripped Rullein's hand and used a lot of strength, hoping it would be enough to make Rullein seething in pain. However, when she was too focused on hurting Rullein, suddenly everything became bright and blinding red. She was deafened by the intense gargles and screams around her.

The sound of the mountain rumbling and erupting was enough to make Aris flinch and cover her ears. She had never heard anything that loud before, and when she looked around, she watched millions of bodies being tortured in the lava. She watched the demons stab the humans with a glowing-red hot spear that pierced through their backs and skulls when the humans didn't dip their whole bodies inside the lava.

Although Aris couldn't feel the heat, she knew how hot it was. She watched how human bodies melted and regenerated rapidly, making them feel pain nonstop. She was petrified, realizing the world that she knew, there was something terrifying like this.

Aris was overwhelmed by everything that had happened around her, but then something emerged from the distance. A silhouette of a shadow beyond the red fog in the far distance. Her eyes were wide open when she realized the shadow was merely a hand, the hand that could easily trample the whole place. She immediately closed her eyes and flinched when the hand was about to crash down.

"Do you understand now? Why I was terrified when I devoured the demon's memories?" Rullein asked.

Aris slowly opened her eyes, realizing she had come back to reality. The hair on her arms and nape were raising, and her legs were shaking uncontrollably. She had to lean against the table as she tried to take a deep breath. Rullein was laughing as she watched Aris try to ground herself from the overwhelming experience.

"Now you should ask yourself, how did Rasmus manage to keep himself sane after he went into that place. A human and to have the Devil by his side, don't you find it weird that he could walk forward after seeing that?" Rullein asked as she leaned against the wall, staring out at the city with more and more eyes on the inn they were staying.

"Can you..." Aris paused as she closed her eyes and took a deep breath. "Can you read human's memories?" She asked, staring into Rullein's eyes.

Rullein tilted her head, staring back at Aris.

"You want to read Rasmus's memories, aren't you?" Rullein smirked as she scoffed. "Well, unfortunately, I can't. Not because I can't read human memories, but because the blood that's running through Rasmus's veins," she explained.

"The Dragon's Blood," Aris hummed as she stood straight and glanced at the window. "That's that, and it seems we have a job to do," she pointed out as she counted the possessed humans that had created a perimeter around the inn.

"A job? More like fun time," Rullein smirked as she pushed herself away from the wall. "Let's do some hunting. To see who dares to disturb Lord Vije, Lady Sira, and Lady Lurein," she chuckled mischievously as she walked toward the door.

Aris hummed in agreement and followed Rullein out of the room. They both went downstairs, and the room became quiet in an instant. Rasmus glanced at them while the Black Hands lowered their heads to show their respect. They all watched those two walk toward the door to the outside.

"Have fun," Rasmus said as he put his focus on the map again.

"Thank you," Rullein smirked as she opened the door wide and walked into the night.