

Evil 381

Chapter 381 A bargaining chip.

Lenin and Novia were speechless when they heard Rasmus's story from when he revealed his journey after he left the Holy Nation with Aris. In just the span of a few months, those two made huge progress and the worst part was that they moved so effortlessly. Lenin knew how capable Rasmus was, not to mention with the money he had, making him almost unstoppable. Novia on the other hand, she finally realized how dangerous Rasmus was, and knew that he couldn't be left alone without being monitored.

"Count, can we speak more privately?" Lenin asked and took a deep breath. "Just the two of us," she pointed out.

Rasmus smiled as he looked at Aris and Rullein, giving them a nod. Lenin closed her eyes, knowing that Rasmus would accept her request.

"Novia, can you bring Lady Aris, Great Spirit Yur, and Lady Rullein to the guest floor? Give them whatever they need," Lenin said as she looked at Novia with a soft smile on her face.

Novia wanted to decline, wanting to stay by Lenin side because she wanted to be there, to be a part of that conversation. However, she nodded as she sighed, standing up from the couch and looking at Aris and Rullein. She then guided Aris, Yur, and Rullein out of the office, leaving Lenin and Rasmus alone.

Lenin flicked her fingers, creating a Mana barrier that prevented anyone from entering, leaving, and listening to their conversation. She leaned back and crossed her legs, placing her hands on her lap as her eyes stared into Rasmus's.

"Why did you tell me everything, Count? You could have just lied or skipped the important parts, but you didn't. You revealed everything, why?" Lenin asked with her brows furrowed.

"Because that's what you want, isn't it, Great Sage?" Rasmus asked back, taking a sip of his tea. "With the current situation that's happening, you might feel like you're losing your grasp, the control over peace on this continent. That's why, I'm giving you assurance, or perhaps a bargaining chip," he answered as he stood straight and put down the teacup.

Lenin clenched her fist, realizing what Rasmus was trying to pull here. She didn't like it at all, she didn't like the fact that Rasmus offered a hand, making him above anyone else. She slowly unclenched her fist, realizing that she had been showing her turmoil, which was something she had never done to anyone in her whole life.

"A bargaining chip? You want humanity put their bet on the same person who killed thousands of innocent lives?" Lenin asked, rubbing her thumb against her index finger. "If we chose to fall, would that affect you in any way? I believe it does," she sat straight as she reached for her teacup.

Rasmus didn't react, and his gaze was pointed at Lenin's eyes.

"You're not our ally, nor are you the demon's ally. You want both of us to kill each other, reducing our numbers before you come in and take the trophy, to be the one that stand on top," Lenin said and took a sip of her tea. "If humankind lost, the demons would grow stronger, perhaps strong enough to threaten you. That's why you're here, offering us something that you believe that we need it. But what if I said that we didn't want that? Would you stay quiet and watch or force yourself to interfere? To help us without us asking," she asked, staring into Rasmus's eyes with a serious expression.

Rasmus slowly formed a smile on his lips as he reached for his teacup, letting out a chuckle. Lenin's right eye twitched when she heard his chuckle, and that wasn't a good sign, making her think that she was wrong about everything.

"Humankind? Which one? The one that just revealed herself that her sainthood was based on a lie and killed thousands of innocent lives to reach where she stands now? Or the ones who chose to look away from that Saint after they found out the truth? Or the ones who have chosen to follow the demons? Believing the demon is the one and true Saint?" Rasmus asked with his head tilted. "Which one, Great Sage? Which one you're talking about?" He smiled and narrowed his eyes a bit.

Lenin felt the sting in her chest, a surge of anger brewing in her chest. Her fear was right the moment she heard Rasmus's chuckle that she was wrong about everything. She couldn't believe she forgot about Aurelia who revealed the dark truth about the Holy Nation and the Angelis family. She realized that the humankind that she spoke about had shattered into pieces, moving in different directions, believing they were all the right one compared to the others.

"I believe I should be the one asking you that question, Great Sage? Which humanity will you save and protect? The one who lied about their divinity, the one who abandoned the truth, or the one who fell for the demon's trick?" Rasmus asked with his brows raised and took a sip of his tea.

"What do you want, Count?" Lenin asked, her voice becoming cold and her gaze almost dead in the eye.

"What do I want? As I said, I'm giving you a bargaining chip," Rasmus answered with a stoic expression, putting down the teacup. "The war is about to happen, Great Sage. You have to move fast and decide what you're going to do with that information," he continued.

Lenin's eyes blurred for a for a split second as her head twitched for a moment. She was almost blinded by rage, almost losing herself to it, almost surrendering herself to the rage.

"And that's your doing, Count. Why did you do that? Why did you release the plague..." Lenin asked, the Mana around her began to react to her emotions, swirling around her as if they were ready to be used, to turn into a powerful magic that could erase anyone from existing.

"You want to wait for the demons to grow even stronger than they already are? They only had a few months ever since Kiel and Yaza appeared in South Neva back then. Do you remember what happened? Do you remember what they had created? A colossal being that could easily flatten the whole continent in a day. We were lucky that the thing was imperfect. You're expecting this time, Nemu and the other one won't do something similar? Do you expect by doing nothing will help you and the others in any way?" Rasmus asked with a serious expression.

"The longer you wait, the more divided humankind will be. Rather than fighting demons, they would fight each other first while letting the demons grow even stronger from it. Let's just say I'm preventing that from happening, preventing humankind from collapsing in Central Neva," Rasmus said as he watched the Mana around Lenin grow thicker and aggressive. "Think about it, Great Sage. Desperation is the greatest method to do the impossible."

Lenin stayed quiet for a whole minute before she reached for her teacup, reheating it with Mana and steam began to appear from the cup. Her gaze was distant, she was thinking of something terrifying, and that was if the fact that Rasmus had known this whole argument and the outcome. She wondered if he had prepared and planned everything before he even set foot on this island. If she was right, she didn't know what to call him, perhaps a prophet.

"This bargaining chip you're talking about. What do you want in return if we decided to take it?" Lenin asked, her gaze still cold, but the anger and the frustration had disappeared from her eyes.

"Do you remember the first time I came to this place, Great Sage? When I was still an instructor in the academy?" Rasmus asked as he leaned back. "About runes, the origin of human magic. I want to learn that, that's all I'm asking," he answered.

Lenin didn't show any reaction, her face was still cold and stiff as she stared into Rasmus's eyes. She did say that it would be impossible for anyone to learn about runes other than those who had sworn their lives to serve and devote to the Magic Tower.

Allowing Rasmus to have such knowledge would only make him even more powerful. His lineage as Orthias, his genius mind as a Blackheart, and his thirst for knowledge and skill, it would give him a huge step even further than the rest.

"You said you wanted to save humanity. Is millions of lives worth less than knowledge to understand runes? Is your resolve to save humanity that weak when you have to consider this?" Rasmus asked with his brows raised.

Lenin raised her hand and pulled out a thick book from the spatial ring. She glanced at the book in her hand for a moment before she put it on the table. She didn't say a word, but her eyes never left the book as if she didn't want him to have it. However, Rasmus placed two books on top of the book, one was red and the other was black.

"The black one is my father's journal and the red one is the journal that I found in the hidden vault of the royal palace in the Refenus Kingdom. You can read them if you want to know the whole mess that happened in the past and what it brought to this day," Rasmus said as he waited for Lenin to take the books.

Lenin slowly grabbed the books, holding them with each hand.

"Those books might help you choose which humanity you'll save and protect, Great Sage. I did say the other reason why I do this is to give you assurance. You were right when you said I would get myself involved even without all this. After all, I would rather to face humankind than demons at the end of the day," Rasmus said as he took the thick book from the table. "Now, I'll excuse myself and learn this book," he stood up and checked the content to see if it was legit, and it was.

Lenin stared at Rasmus for a few seconds before she removed the barrier.

"They're on the 513rd floor. You know how to get there, so I don't have to escort you there, Count," Lenin said as she checked the contents of both books.

"Yes, of course..." Rasmus said as he walked away and left the room.

Chapter 382 - 382: The truth behind loyalty.

It had been 3 days since Rasmus came to Gratlan and the news had been spreading like wildfire. So many powerful figures came to the tower, requesting an audience for Lenin. They wanted to seek justice, to bring him to court, and some of them wanted him dead.

The Magic Tower had closed its doors to all the guests no matter who they were. Thanks to the Magic Tower's independence, nobody could touch it without Lenin's permission. The Magic Tower had always separated themselves from any political affairs, making it both powerful and powerless in the eye of the law.

Lenin had been busy reading Erglade's journal, not letting her eyes close other than from wetting her eyes. She had uncovered all the majority events and unraveled the truth behind his rebellion. She also found out about the Zevrathi and their followers that led toward powerful figures in Neva.

"Master, the Council of Neva is summoning you. They have the Council Supreme Court with them," Novia said as she stood in front of Lenin's desk. "They're questioning your decision to protect Count Blackheart in the tower, giving him protection from the law," she continued.

"How many council members attend this matter?" Lenin looked at Novia with her brows raised.

"Seven, so far. I'm not sure there will be more of them coming," Novia answered as she sat down across from Lenin.

Lenin scoffed as she shook her head, finding it funny.

"What can those people do? Put handcuffs on him? Point their swords at him?" Lenin asked as she kept reading. "Tell them I don't have a reason to answer their call since the majority of the members don't attend for this matter. If they don't like it, then come and try to breach the Magic Tower. If they manage to breakthrough, I'll give them Count Blackheart. If they think it's impossible, then don't even bother to think they're powerful enough to arrest him," she continued.

Novia didn't say a word and just stared at the book in Lenin's hand. Her expression was stoic, but her gaze was distant and almost empty. Lenin could see that, and decided to put down the book.

"Answer me, Novia. What do you call a soldier who kills their enemy?" Lenin asked, staring into Novia's eyes.

"Loyalty, because the soldier is following an order," Novia answered without hesitation as she stared back at Lenin.

"That's right. Loyalty trumps guilt, wrongdoings, and regret. However, the truth isn't that simple, it never is," Lenin said as she crossed her arms on the table, tapping her index finger against her forearm. "The only one who can be called innocent is a small child, the rest is naive. That's what Rasmus said back then, during the White Flower ceremony, once we won the war against demons in South Neva," she continued.

Novia's expression was unreadable when she kept staring at Lenin. She understood what Lenin was trying to say, about the Council and the current situation.

"Why are you quoting him, Master?" Novia asked, her voice cold, unable to hide her disapproval. "Are you really going to allow yourself to play in his game? To be a pawn?" She asked.

"Hmm, then give me a suggestion, Novia. Tell me, what do you want me to do," Lenin asked, her gaze and voice gentle as she clasped her hands and rested her chin on them. "The moment I chose to not play his game, that would be the day everything toppled to his will, including myself," she said, staring down at Erglade's journal.

"He could easily kill everyone, but he didn't. Why? Because he doesn't find joy in killing, and perhaps he rather has an audience, eye witnesses when he achieves his goal. He wants to prove to us that we are

wrong and incapable. He wants to show that everything that happens, it will be our fault, not his..." Lenin continued as she closed her eyes.

"Right now, the reason why I chose to play along with Rasmus and chose to give him protection in this tower, is because I'm protecting humankind from bloodbath. It's not that I trust him, I would never trust him. It's because I trust the Council even less because they failed to see the reason why I'm keeping Rasmus here for everyone's safety," Lenin slowly opened her eyes and stared into Novia's eyes.

"If I showed my loyalty to the Council, I would open the gate, letting Rasmus go. If that happened, the moment he stepped foot out of the tower, death would follow him everywhere. So? Should I show my loyalty like a soldier that follows order?" Lenin raised her brows, staring into Novia's eyes.

Novia knew that, and she knew the reason behind Lenin for keeping Rasmus in the tower. She knew, she understood, but she was furious that they were so powerless that allowing a criminal, a man who did a genocide to stay in the tower.

"I can read your thoughts through your gaze and silence, Novia. You're angry and feel powerless, and I am too," Lenin said as she looked at the other book that Rasmus gave her. "Read this and see if humankind is truly far more innocent than Rasmus than you think..." She slid the book across the table toward Novia.

Novia looked at the book for a few seconds before she grabbed it. She looked at the book belonging to the Runesche royal family of the Refenus Kingdom. She raised her brows and was ready to read it when suddenly someone knocked on the door.

"Come in," Lenin glanced at the door.

A sage entered the room and lowered his head before he opened his mouth.

"His majesty Suncrown is asking for your audience, Great Sage," the Sage said.

Lenin was surprised when Julius Suncrown came to Gratlan. She looked at Novia, but Novia shook her head, not knowing that Julius was in Gratlan either. However, that changed everything since Julius held a high position in the Council of Neva.

"Julius is here in Gratlan? He's asking for an audience? Where? In the Council palace?" Lenin asked as she stood up.

"No, Great Sage. His Majesty Suncrown is at the entrance, on his own..." The Sage answered. "He said that he wouldn't be leaving until you told him to leave, Great Sage."

Lenin furrowed her brows and immediately walked to the center of the room, snapping her finger to activate the teleportation magic. The Sage lowered his head and immediately left the room while Novia decided to follow Lenin and stood by her side.

They teleported to the ground floor and hurriedly walked toward the entrance. Lenin found it weird that Julius came to Gratlan on his own, meaning he came not for the issue but for something else. When they arrived at the entrance, he saw a man wearing a black cloak, hiding his face with a hood and sitting on a bench.

"Your Majesty?" Lenin asked as she stood in front of Julius.

Julius slowly looked up and pulled down the hood, revealing his golden hair. He slowly got up and lowered his head to Lenin. It was as the Sage said that he was alone with no knights with him, not even Arandil.

"Great Sage..." Julius said, and then looked at Novia, "Lady Novia."

"Let's talk in private, Your Majesty," Lenin said as she pointed her hand at the big magic circle at the center of the massive hall.

They went back to Lenin's office and sealed the room with Mana barrier. There was only silence, and something seemed to be bothering Julius. He was shocked that Rasmus was in the tower as well, meaning that he didn't know anything about the issue and came for another matter.

"The reason of my visit isn't for Count Blackheart, but to inform you that the war is about to break," Julius said with a serious expression as he looked at Novia offering him a cup of tea, giving her a nod. "There has been movement from Nemu and the numbers of his followers are getting bigger every hour."

There have been so many cases of murder and missing people, and the worst part is that some nations are planning to take over land that belonged to the Holy Nation. They want the corpse that the Angelis family has been preserved," he explained and took a sip of his tea.

"There have been movements on the other nations as well, forming factions everywhere. The land that belonged to the Refenus Kingdom is slowly being taken by all the neighboring nations, and it's a matter of time before they wage war to take the capital city," Julius said as he stared at his reflection in the tea. "The peace is so fragile that it's easily broken from the moment Saint Aurelia chose to reveal the dark secret to the world," he added.

"Fragile?" Lenin asked with her brows raised. "If Count Blackheart heard that, he would laugh at you, Your Majesty. He has predicted that all along, and he would love to hear that word, coming from you," she smiled as she stared blankly at the window.

Julius furrowed his brows and glanced at Novia, shocked by Lenin's comment about his words. Novia didn't say a word nor move her head, slowly realizing that things were exactly like what Rasmus had said.

"And why are you here, Your Majesty? Are you asking me to prevent the war from happening?" Lenin asked, crossing her legs.

"I would be a fool to believe that preventing the war was possible," Julius shook his head. "I'm here to ask you what you're going to do with this information? What kind of plan can we make," he answered.

"The Magic Tower will protect those who have nothing but the truth. I will protect Aurelia because she's the only one who's brave enough to reveal the truth, uphold the truth, embrace the truth and prepared for the worst," Lenin answered as she stared into Julius's eyes. She knew that the Sun Empire wouldn't be able to follow her decision because it would question their decision and risk their position in Central Neva if they decided to join hand with Aurelia who revealed the rotten and dark truth behind the Angelis family's sainthood. "That's my answer, Your Majesty. That's my plan," she added.

Julius's expression was unreadable until he closed his eyes, nodding with understanding. He realized that the discord had happened even among the Council, and feared that the damage would be more severe than he could predict.

"As long as there are lies, deception, and greed, Aurelia's faction will be the only faction I'll protect as I have sworn to protect someone like her, not the people," Lenin said with a serious expression.

"Yes, I understand, Great Sage," Julius slowly got up as he took a deep breath. "Thank you, for your time. If there's a chance for us to see each other again, I hope we will be fighting for the same cause," he said as he lowered his head and decided to leave.

Lenin didn't stand up nor looked at Julius, but she glanced at Novia, giving her a nod to escort him. Novia nodded with understanding and followed Julius, escorting him out of the Magic Tower.

Chapter 383 - 383: Abandonment.

Novia came back after she made sure Julius had left the City of Knowledge safely. She looked at Lenin, sitting on the couch with a cup of tea in her hand. She approached Lenin and sat beside her, facing her body toward her.

"Master, are we really going to leave the Council? The consequences will be severe, not just about the status of the Magic Tower, but also about the fact we will turn a blind eye when something happens to them. Are we really going to do that? To watch them suffer?" Novia asked in a quiet voice.

Novia knew it was the right choice, and she knew she agreed completely with Lenin. However, she wanted to know if Lenin was ready to accept the fact they were about to abandon the majority of the people.

"It's not like they don't have a choice, Novia. If they have nothing to hide and have lived their lives with nothing but the truth, honesty, and integrity, they can join Aurelia. People like them, they don't care about pride, about ruining their reputation. They only care about the safety of their people and themselves," Lenin answered, taking a sip of the tea. Her expression was calm and relaxed.

Novia watched every movement of Lenin's mouth and listened to every word she said. She realized that perhaps they weren't abandoning them but rather giving them a chance to follow the figure who upheld the truth.

"I still believe there are a lot of rulers, kings, and queens who will choose to follow Aurelia. However, there will be a lot of them who will fall from their own pride. We can't save those who don't want to be saved. It's not abandonment, it's them choosing to walk away when we give them an option," Lenin looked at Novia with a serious expression.

Novia hummed, and tried to process everything she heard and what she had learned from her Master. She was Lenin's disciple, the future Great Sage, and she knew she had to learn from Lenin. She might be a genius, to almost reach Lenin's level at such a young age, but her way of thinking was still that of a young adult.

"We aren't alone in this, Novia. Although Aurelia chose to abandon her family and the Holy Nation, she has powerful people behind her," Lenin pointed out, putting the teacup on the table.

"Powerful people? You mean Saint Serena? But she's Rasmus's people. We can't trust her either, and so far we know nothing much about her and her goal after she came back to life. Not to mention, that butler of his, Videl, he's someone who has followed Rasmus the longest. We can't trust him either," Novia said with her brows furrowed, her gaze pointed at Lenin's eyes.

"Who said I'm talking about them?" Lenin raised her brows with a smile on her face. "I'm talking about those who fought with us back in South Neva. Archduke Thalior, Lady Uriel, and the others," she placed her hand on Novia's head.

Novia raised her brows, realizing that they had powerful allies. Those people fought alongside them and won against the demon forces in South Neva.

"Remember what Princess Anastasha said in the White Flower Ceremony? She motivated them that the war was far from over, and gave them purpose, a strength to help the other continents that were struggling against demon forces as well. After all, the ones who fought alongside them were us, former Saint Astrea, and Saint Serena. We will request their assistance, making us a formidable faction that will persuade other factions to join us," Lenin continued as she caressed Novia's hair with a soft smirk on her face.

Novia smiled, realizing that they wouldn't be abandoning the people. She was relieved that Lenin's plan was strong enough to prevent others from ignoring them. With South Neva's support, Aurelia would become the only faction with such power.

"We won't abandon the people, we abandon their leaders who choose their pride and ego. We will save humanity," Lenin nodded and caressed Novia's cheek.

"But, Master? What if the South didn't want to help us? What if they didn't want to join hands with Aurelia because of the truth she revealed?" Novia asked, searching Lenin's eyes for a sign of assurance.

"They will help us because no matter how rotten the Angelis family and the Holy Nation were, Lady Astrea sacrificed her well-being to save millions of lives in South Neva. It's not the Angelis family, it's not the Holy Nation, it's helping the daughter of the woman who saved them," Lenin answered and held Novia's hand firmly. "If that wasn't enough? Then I'll remind them that the demons aren't the only threat, but Rasmus Blackheart is also a threat. They all know that, they will agree on that, and they will try to hold him back," her expression became serious and stern as she stared into Novia's eyes.

Novia nodded in agreement on Lenin's second point, the thing that would untie humankind. She was tired of seeing Rasmus to be untouchable, invincible from the consequences of his actions. She wanted him to pay for everything he had done.

"Should we go to South Neva now, Master? Emperor Julius said that the war is about to break, and we might not have much time to prepare," Novia asked.

"Yes, but this time I'll be going alone, Novia. It will be a lot faster if I go there on my own, and I want you to stay here, to handle the affairs in the tower," Lenin answered as she looked outside the window. "I want you to keep an eye on Rasmus as well, just don't answer or ask any question because he will pick you up and place you in a spot where he wants you to be," she warned.

"Yes, Master. I understand," Novia nodded.

There was only silence in the room because they both had something to think about. Lenin was thinking about multiple plans she needed to prepare if one failed. Novia was thinking about what would happen to Central Neva when the war broke, hoping that they would unite to fight the threat together.

"Speaking of him, where is he now?" Lenin asked, turning her head to look at Novia.

"He's inside the spatial room, Master. He asked permission to use it this morning, and he requested to send everyone to leave the spatial room, leaving him alone there," Novia answered. "He's completely alone there, Lady Aris and Lady Rullein didn't follow him," she added.

Lenin furrowed her brows, finding it suspicious and concerning that Rasmus chose to be alone. Before she could open her mouth, the whole Magic Tower shook heavily that it almost made both of them fall to the ground. They were confused as to what was happening because they were on Gratlan, the floating island which meant they shouldn't feel any earthquakes.

"What's happening?!" Novia looked at the ceiling and watched the chandelier swing around.

"Come with me... I think I know where the source is coming from," Lenin said as she walked out of the office with the whole Magic tower trembling quite fiercely.

They both went to the 100th floor where the testing area and the spatial space were. They were shocked when some of the magic formations that acted as a way to travel from one floor to another were destroyed. They assumed they were broken because of the impact of the earthquake, however, they were confused as to why that was possible since magic formations shouldn't get affected by physical damage.

Lenin watched the sages who were outside the testing area to be unconscious. The whole floor was covered in thick smoke dust that made it impossible to see what was in front of her. No magic devices that worked on that floor, a complete darkness. But what shocked her to her core was when she saw the device that maintained the spatial space to be completely destroyed. The device that should be the strongest device that humankind has ever produced.

"The spatial space device..." Novia's voice trembled as she watched how the pipes made of the strongest alloy and Mana stones to bend and shatter into pieces. "We tested so many powerful spells in there, but nothing could even affect the device, but this. What happened here?" She asked.

"Isn't that obvious, Novia? The fact the whole tower tremble because of this, that means someone or something created a spell that strong enough to destroy the spatial space and affect the whole tower," Lenin responded as she stared at the distance where the thick smoke blocked her vision.

Novia looked at Lenin, not wanting to believe that someone or something was Rasmus. However, amidst the chaos and the darkness, they both saw a pair of glowing blue eyes through the thick smoke. They both stood there, couldn't believe it, they couldn't believe the son of Erglade had truly finally awakened his bloodline as Orthias.

The pair of glowing blue eyes seemed to stare at them and grow closer. The moment the eyes belonged to Rasmus, they both stared at him with fear and anxiety.

Rasmus raised his hand and pulled out the book of Runes that Lenin had lent him. He offered the book to Lenin, but she was too stunned to process what had just happened.

"Thank you for the book, I have mastered it, and I don't need it anymore," Rasmus said as he kept offering the book to Lenin.

Lenin looked down at the book and slowly took it away from Rasmus's hand. She slowly looked up at him, holding her breath from the shock and confusion. Nobody should be capable of learning Runes in just three days because it took her a decade to master it.

"I apologize for the damage, I tried to create a new magic spell, and it went flawlessly," Rasmus said with a smile as he walked past Lenin.

Chapter 384 - 384: Halfway.

Aris, Rullein, and Yur stared at Rasmus who had just entered the room. Their eyes were focused on something around him, something that he began to see as well. The real depiction of Mana and energy, floating in the air with various colors.

"You have awakened half of the power within you," Aris said as she stood up and approached Rasmus with a glass of champagne in her hand. "Do you see it now?" She asked with her brows raised.

Rasmus looked at the overflowing blue energy around Aris that had turned into Mana. It was the first time he saw the Orthias energy, their life essence, perhaps the purest form of Mana. He then glanced at Rullein and saw nothing but an abyss around her. A whirlpool of black smoke, moving in a circle that seemed to devour every Mana that got caught in it.

"Yes, I can see everything now," Rasmus nodded, looking at Yur and the light green that came out of its body. "Yours is blue, Yur's is green, and Rullein's is pitch black..." He pointed out as he looked at the three of them. "I can smell them too," he added as he tried to find the difference in smell for each color that existed in the air.

Rasmus remembered what Aris said about the different elements in the air that existed in the air. Each color represented a different element, and this time Rasmus could see them and smell them. He could smell hydrogen, oxygen, and the other elements in the air, something that he never thought it was possible. The smell wasn't strong, it was so subtle and yet it was easy to distinguish one from another.

"Welcome to our world," Rullein smirked and took a sip of her whiskey. "Now you're a part of us, a transcendent being, beyond human's capability."

Rasmus hummed as he walked toward the table to have a drink. His face was a bit pale after he had just pulled something that even humans on Earth couldn't possibly do. His hands were shaking both from exhaustion and excitement after what he had just created in the spatial space.

"What did you do? You shook the whole tower," Aris asked.

"An experiment," Rasmus poured a glass of whiskey and downed it in a single gulp.

Aris raised her brows, curious about what Rasmus did, and it always intrigued her when it came to him. She had seen enough of how he interpreted every information and knowledge, turning them into something that even Orthias couldn't think of. Before she could ask, they heard a knock on the door and Lenin's voice.

Lenin walked in with Novia, still shocked by what had happened in the Magic Tower. Rasmus didn't know that he had just shaken the whole floating island with his experiment. The island was big, and whatever he did in the spatial space that was supposed to separate the two realms, both realms felt it.

"Count, I don't think you can get away with this," Lenin said with a serious expression, staring at Rasmus who was still shaking. "I'm talking about the damage you have done. No money could fix what you did, so what are you planning to do to pay for it?" She asked with her arms crossed.

Novia was surprised and anxious at the same time when Lenin chose to confront Rasmus in front of Aris and Rullein. She knew how risky it was because she knew too well that Lenin wouldn't even be able to win against Aris if Aris chose to make Lenin shut her mouth or even kneel. She glanced at Rullein, seeing that thrill in Rullein's orange eyes that reminded her of something primordial, a dragon.

"What do you want to pay it with, Great Sage?" Rasmus asked, filling the glass with whiskey again. "If it's something I can afford, I'll consider it," he muttered and took a sip of the whiskey.

Novia was mildly surprised that Rasmus chose to entertain Lenin's demands. She found it illogical and weird that Rasmus seemed to agree when he could easily brush it off and used power to shut Lenin down. This had always been the thing that made her so puzzled when Rasmus was an evil man but somehow being reasonable.

"Your next move, I want to know your next move. What are you going to do from here? Where are you going? What's your plan?" Lenin asked as she walked toward Rasmus, ignoring Aris and Rullein.

Novia had never seen Lenin to be so straightforwardly desperate. She had been by Lenin's side almost her whole life, and she had never witnessed something like this. She was a bit anxious when Lenin decided to double down on her demands after knowing Rasmus would consider it.

"That's a quite cheap price to pay for what I did," Rasmus said as he emptied the glass and put the glass on the counter. "I have no plan, Great Sage. I have done what I needed to do. I'm waiting for the war to break, that's the plan," he answered, staring into Lenin's eyes.

Lenin stared into Rasmus's eyes, searching if there was a sign of deception. But what she found was nothing but the truth, and she knew him well enough that he had never lied before.

"If that's a cheap price, then I'll demand something else, Count," Lenin said as she poured a glass of whiskey for herself. "When are you going to join the war? Are you going to be the hero once again just like in South Neva?" She asked, downing the whiskey in the glass.

"It's interesting that you said that when you, Archduke Thalior, and the others were the ones who fabricated that hero thing toward me," Rasmus smiled as he shook his head. "How was it? How does it feel now when you tried to bind me as a hero figure, believing that would stop me from killing innocent lives?" He asked back.

Lenin didn't say a word and kept staring at Rasmus. She knew it was a mistake, or perhaps a useless effort to bind him from doing what he pleased. Not only did that make them look like fools, they felt responsible for giving him the advantage of being a hero and lowered everyone's guards because of that image they gave him. She knew that she was responsible indirectly for the deaths of those people that Rasmus had killed.

"To answer your question, no, I don't care about being a hero or a mass murderer. I'll join the war the moment you all fail to stop the demon forces," Rasmus answered as he exhaled deeply, pouring whiskey into Lenin's glass. "If you really want me to feel powerless, to make me lose my footing, try to win this war without me," he stared into Lenin's eyes, filling the glass full before he stopped pouring the whiskey into Lenin's glass.

Lenin narrowed her eyes, wondering if it was a trap or if it was the truth. At that point, she didn't know anymore, but one thing for sure was that if humans could win the war without Rasmus's help, it would give humankind hope. She looked down at the glass in her hand before she put it down.

"You think I'm foolish, Count?" Lenin asked with her brows raised. "Lady Erlina and Carrion are your people, and we at the Magic Tower do need their Mana stones for this upcoming war. That alone is enough to say that you have helped us indirectly. Not to mention Saint Serena and your butler that are on Aurelia's side right now. They're all your people, and as long as they're there, you're indirectly helping us. No matter what we do, you'll always be the one who controls the board while we are just your pawns. Isn't that right, Count?" She asked with a cold gaze.

Rasmus smiled, knowing that Lenin would see it and could see through his plan. However, it was already too late for her or Aurelia to get rid of him and his people. They were placed in a perfect spot that removing them would only stop the gears from moving entirely.

"You have planned all this before you even set foot back in Central Neva," Lenin said, realizing it was too late, or perhaps she was unaware of that in the first place.

"Do you think I'm that amazing, Great Sage?" Rasmus asked with his brows raised, crossing his arms.

"Hmm, I don't have time for this, Count. I have somewhere else to be, so thank you for your information, and have a good day," Lenin smiled before she turned around and walked away.

Rasmus watched Lenin and Novia leave the room, and then Rullein walked to the counter, taking Lenin's glass of whiskey and drinking it.

"She's bold, I like her," Rullein said and kept sipping the whiskey.

"She's a Great Sage for a reason," Rasmus nodded in agreement.

Chapter 385 - 385: Considerate.

Novia opened the door wide and immediately the wind hit her face and the sound of heavy wind breached her ears. Her hair was blown by the wind and a few strands of hair hit her eyes, slowly tucking them behind her ear. Her gaze was pointed at Rasmus, sitting on the bench with his father's journal in his hand. The beautiful big garden on the 345th floor of the tower was one of the few favorite places for the guests to visit.

Novia walked toward Rasmus with the cloud moving around them. She held the dark red book and had read everything about the truth that the Refenus Kingdom and the Runesche family secrets. She didn't know what to feel, didn't know what to say, or what to think about it.

"I have read it..." Novia said, offering the book back to Rasmus.

Rasmus glanced at the book before he lifted his head to look at Novia.

"And what your thought about it?" Rasmus asked, slowly moving aside to give a big gap of distance and space for her to sit on the bench. "I don't need it anymore. You can have it," he said and took his focus back to his father's journal.

Novia looked at the empty space on the bench, hesitant to sit with Rasmus. However, she decided to sit down on the far side of the bench, not wanting to get too close to him. She looked at the fast blue sky around her as she thought about the content of the book.

"Evil, and I understand why your late father decided to raise his banner for a rebellion. To think the whole nation and the people who ruled over the people were using them and nurturing them to be sacrificed for something evil," Novia answered, staring down at the book in her hand. "The fact that there are more people like them, more nations that served as vassals for the Zevrathi and the demons. I don't know what to think," she added.

Rasmus nodded his head and kept reading the journal.

"Now you know the truth, what are you going to do, Lady Novia? Are you going to stay quiet even after knowing the truth?" Rasmus asked, flipping the page as he leaned back, making himself comfortable. "Does justice can even fathom for what they have done in the past centuries? To make them pay for what they have done?" He added.

Novia took a deep breath as she leaned back and looked up at the blue sky. She exhaled slowly with her distant gaze filled with uncertainty and doubt.

"No..." Novia shook her head. "They have caused so many deaths with their lies and deceptions. They were aware and purposely kill innocent lives for the lord they served. No, those people deserved to die," she muttered.

"Do they? What makes you and I so different then when we both want the same thing?" Rasmus asked, closing the journal and putting it in his inner suit's pocket. "You know the truth that it wasn't me who killed innocent lives in the capital city of the Refenus Kingdom. It wasn't me who killed the Runesche royal family during their daughter's coming-of-age ceremony. But that doesn't mean I don't want them dead. You and I aren't that different in this context, are we?"

Novia glanced at Rasmus, not liking the idea that she would put herself in the same shoes as him.

"No, we are different. You don't care about the lives they took and you don't do it for the people, you only care to get rid of them because they were an obstacle that need to be eliminated. We are not the same, Count," Novia answered with a stern look on her face.

A smile formed on Rasmus's face as he stared at the distance. Novia expected him to give a piece of his mind, to argue, but there was nothing but silence. She didn't know what to feel when she realized that Rasmus didn't try to win the argument. Did she just corner him? Did she just win an argument? But she felt anxious rather than relieved.

"I don't want to be like you, Count. I would rather kill myself than have to even set my foot on the line you're walking on," Novia said, staring at Rasmus with a serious and stern look. "Yes, I believe we are different. Yes, I'm aware that in the end we want the same thing. Yes, I might sound naive or a hypocrite. But this conversation alone won't justify my naivety or hypocrisy. The end does justify my conviction and belief, proving that I am different than you, Count," she continued.

"Then prove it," Rasmus slowly turned his head to look at Novia, staring into her eyes with his piercing blue eyes. "Follow the Great Sage's step because the world needs people like her. Nobody is strong or brave enough to be standing where she's standing. She's righteous and stands where the truth is, even if it means to be against the majority of people and makes her the enemy of humankind. She and I aren't that different, one misstep and she will be seen in the same line where I'm walking on. So, be careful, Lady Novia, be very careful," he continued, his eyes never leaving Novia's.

Novia was shocked, unsettled deeply moved when Rasmus suddenly said something that caused her heart to clench. She wanted to hate him for who he was and for what he had done, but he couldn't completely hate him. She questioned Lenin about why she would let Rasmus in, why she would keep indulging in a conversation with him, why she would tolerate him, and why she never thought of killing him while she could. This moment was when she felt it, the feeling of being seen, acknowledged, and recognized for her belief and conviction by someone who she hated that apparently understood her more than anyone else.

Novia felt tears pricking in the back of her eyes, and immediately blinked them away. She averted her gaze and tried to look at the flowers around her as she took deep breaths.

"The war, do you understand why I want the war to break? Sure, I want humankind to fight against the demons, to kill each other. But this is also a perfect opportunity to get rid of the corruption, the rotten roots that have caused this illusion of peace that you believed to be the peak of humanity," Rasmus said, looking up at the sky. "You can't clean a pond without getting rid of all the water first," he muttered as he closed his eyes.

Novia turned her head to look at Rasmus, finding his last quote to be so true that she hated to admit it. She didn't say a word, and Rasmus knew that she didn't want to agree with his words.

"Of course there are other methods, the more complex, time consuming, and putting unimaginable efforts to clean the pond. But in this case, war is inevitable. There's no choice but to get rid of the water, Lady Novia. It's not because you want it that way, but because it's already happening and you have to take the opportunity to do so. It's not about what's right or wrong, it's about being efficient in every situation," Rasmus said, slowly opening his eyes.

Novia didn't say a word, there was only silence and her grip on the book tightened. She agreed but silently, not wanting to be seen as if she agreed with Rasmus, not wanting to give him the satisfaction.

"I said it, Lady Novia. The path that Great Sage is walking and the path I'm walking, the gap is so thin and yet it feels so different for those who understand it," Rasmus looked at Novia as he slowly got up from the bench. He let the breeze, the sound of humming wind around him to blow away the thick and heavy atmosphere. "As I said, be careful, be very careful of the path you want to follow, Lady Novia. That's the only thing that I can say to you," he added.

Novia slowly looked up, finally having the conviction and the strength to stare into his eyes again. There was a lump in her throat, and she chose to let it out even though she would regret it afterward.

"Why are you being so considerate, Count?" Novia asked, her heart pounding and holding her breath.

"When have I ever not been considerate, Lady Novia? Is it the hatred that makes you so blind to seeing it? Or is it something else?" Rasmus asked back, tilting his head. "But to answer your question, it's because I never look down on others unless they're forcing me to," he smiled as he lowered his head a bit before he walked away and went back inside the tower.

Novia exhaled deeply as she put down the book before she rubbed her face with frustration and confusion.

Chapter 386 - 386: A revolution.

Alexander walked out of his room and stood on the balcony, breathing the fresh morning air. He leaned his arms against the railing as the maids prepared the table and the tea for him in the background. He looked at the vast greenery, the forest, the vast fields, the hills, and the mountains, everything was visible from where he stood.

"Young Master, your father is on his way to join your morning routine," a butler said as he lowered his head to Alexander.

"Yes, thank you, Sullivan. Have you eaten your breakfast?" Alexander asked as he turned around, walking toward the table as he looked at the old man in black Butler attire.

"Yes, I have, Young Master. Thank you for asking," Sullivan smiled warmly as he lowered his head once again before he excused himself.

Alexander thanked all the maids who had prepared the table for him. He watched them all leave, leaving him alone in this beautiful weather and scenery. He then heard the door into his room being opened, and slowly he got up from his seat to greet his father. However, to his surprise, he saw someone walking behind his father, Marina Valier the Sorceress twin.

"Father? Why is Lady Marina here?" Alexander looked at his father, a man with slick back black hair and a magnificent mustache.

The family head of the Ravenshroud, the Prince of Neva. The man who owned the biggest land and army compared to any powerful family and nation. The man who was said to be the face of West Neva, Nicholas Ravenshroud.

"I know you'd be surprised, and it has something to do with the letter you sent to me, Alex," Nicholas said as he walked to the table and watched Alexander pull the chair for him. "I'm still shocked about your decision, Alex. This is something that we need to discuss in person," he added as he sat down.

Alexander took a deep breath as he looked at his father and then at Marina. He knew there was no going back, so he pulled the chair for Marina and lowered his head to her.

Marina sat across from Nicholas and beside Alexander. She didn't say a word and just enjoyed her tea and the scenery around her.

Nicholas pulled the opened letter from his pocket, looking at it for a moment before he put it on the table. That letter was the letter that Alexander sent to him a few days ago, a request letter.

"You want to go to Central Neva to be with Lady Aurelia, why?" Nicholas asked, staring into Alexander's eyes with curiosity. "I have expected a lot of things that you would ask of me from the moment you knew the situation here, but I didn't expect this one at all," he added, crossing his arms and one hand twirling his mustache.

Nicholas sighed and took a sip of his tea as he looked at the distance. He thought for a moment, to think of the right words to use to his son.

"You wanted to go there after you heard the news about the Angelis family and the Holy Nation. I know that you're close with Lady Aurelia, but why do you want to be involved in her affair, Alex? I can't fathom why you would go that far, and even request a dozen Green Shroud units just for her," Nicholas asked, his hands clasped on the table as he stared at Alexander.

Alexander cleared his throat as he took a shuddering breath and looked at the breakfast on the table in front of him.

"Father, this isn't about friendship or about being opportunistic. The bond that we all have even after we leave the academy, something that we have sworn in our hearts. It's complicated, father, this is something that all the six of us want, a revolution," Alexander answered, not knowing how to put it in the right word and hoping that his father would understand.

"A revolution?" Nicholas raised his brows and crossed his arms. "You did mention that you had an amazing time in the academy even though you decided to draw from it not long after. What's this revolution you mentioned, my son?" He asked with a serious expression.

Nicholas knew that Alexander was a bright kid, too bright and too analytic about things he learned. Something did change his son into a man that seemed to see things differently, to seek understanding from every different perspective rather than from one. He remembered that Alexander had mentioned Rasmus and his methods and ways of thinking that were both unorthodox and dangerous.

"It's about our wish to rebuild everything from nothing. To reshape this fragile world because of the broken system. We all knew that one day something like this would happen the moment the fragile peace was broken, knew that big wars would break at any time," Alexander answered with a serious expression. "We want to make the world into a world with so little flaws, the flaws that can be fixed without having to spill any blood or to put a blade on each other's back for their own safety."

"Father, I know that I'm being naive in a way, for being too optimistic, but I know that I'm not alone in this. There are people like me who want this, and we all have steeled our hearts, a silent promise with each other that we will walk this path together, the six of us," Alexander said, staring into Nicholas' eyes with determination. "I don't mind it at all if you can't lend me the Green Shroud units, I will still go to Central Neva to be with Lady Aurelia, to fulfill my promise, to show her that I'm in this with her," he added.

Nicholas could see the conviction in Alexander's eyes, it was his proudest moment to see his son stand up for what he believed in. It reminded him of his younger self when he pursued what he believed in, making a name for himself and getting recognition from his peers.

"I can't give you what you want, Alex. Not because I don't want to lend you the Green Shroud units, but because we need them here, to protect our land from the demonic beasts," Nicholas said as he shook his head, and saw no reaction from Alexander. "But Lady Marina is here because she will be following you to Central Neva, to assist you there," he revealed as he looked at Marina and gave her a nod.

Alexander was shocked when he found out that Marina was going to join him. He slowly turned his head to look at Marina, confused and curious why she would join him when the situation in West Neva wasn't even that much better than in Central Neva. He couldn't believe that his father had given him permission to go so easily.

"My sister said that she was fond of Count Blackheart, and said that he could be the answer to our current crisis. I would like meet him in person, perhaps to learn about him as well," Marina said and took a sip of her tea, her red puffy hair like an ember when it basked in the morning sun.

"Lady Marina, Count Rasmus isn't someone that you should learn..." Alexander said with a serious expression. "He's not your ordinary person, no, he's dangerous that you might regret trying to get close to him," he warned.

Marin smiled as she took a sip of her tea, smiling and staring into the distance.

"I know, my twin sister also said the same thing, but she told me that he wasn't the type who would push you into the corner if you weren't trying to push him in the first place. So, I won't try to push him, I just want to understand him," Marina answered as she looked at Alexander. "Am I wrong?" She asked with her brows raised.

Alexander thought for a moment and knew that Marina was right, and only so few people knew about that. Everyone only saw him as dangerous, and he would warn others too because people tend to challenge him and his way of thinking. He knew that all too well because he spent months as his student, and knew that Rasmus could be an extraordinary person that he had ever met when it came to knowledge and wisdom.

"Yes, that's right. Count Rasmus is an extraordinary person. He never disrespected people's beliefs and views about the world. He never called everyone naive or wrong. He never dismissed everyone's belief and chose to understand them first before he argued. He was someone you can trust with your doubt and secret, not giving you what you want to hear but gives you what to think and to consider," Alexander answered with a smile on his face with a blank stare on his face.

"Perfect, then that's not a problem if I joined you. After all, I do want to fight these so-called leaders of the demon forces, the ones that my sister couldn't even defeat," Marina said with a grin on her face.

Alexander knew that he wouldn't be any of the help to Aurelia since he wasn't good enough to even fight a single demon. However, he believed that his brain would help Aurelia in treading the path she desired, and he would do anything to make it happen.

"Alex, if I didn't give you a permission to go, what would you do?" Nicholas asked as he took a sip of his tea.

"I would still leave to be by Lady Aurelia's side," Alexander answered.

"Even if I would threaten you with losing your last name?" Nicholas asked with his brows raised.

"Yes, I would still leave because I knew that one day I would tread my own path just like Lady Aurelia," Alexander answered and nodded without hesitation. "I know what I need to do in this life, father. I'm not asking you respect it, but I want you to watch me either I fail or succeed," he stared his father in the eye.

Nicholas smiled as he gave a nod with understanding.

"Go, and be free," Nicholas said as he put his hand on Alexander's shoulder gripping it tightly and shook it gently.

Alexander smiled as he nodded with determination.

Chapter 387 - 387: Assistance.

Lenin walked up the long stairs, staring down at her feet with a distant and troubled gaze. She slowly lifted her head when she felt presences in front of her. Thalior was standing in the middle, Uriel and Xena were standing beside Thalior. The three of them stood on top of the stairs, looking at Lenin with anxiety. They didn't know about her visit, but they had expected that she would come to visit with bad news.

"Great Sage..." Thalior lowered his head, then Uriel and Xena lowered their heads after.

"Seeing your expression like that makes it easier for me to explain the reason of my visit, Archduke," Lenin said as she stood in front of Thalior and stared at the three of them. "We don't have much time, and Central Neva needs your assistance. I need your assistance," she revealed with a serious expression, staring into Thalior's eyes.

Thalior closed his eyes, nodding with understanding.

"We heard the news, of what had happened to the Angelis family and the Holy Nation," Thalior said as he opened his eyes. "And we also heard about what Count Blackheart did to the Refenus Kingdom and its people," he added, his expression was cold and filled with hatred when he mentioned Rasmus.

"I don't believe that I'm defending Count Blackheart, but he wasn't the one who killed the royal family or killed the people in the capital city. Things are a lot more complicated over there," Lenin said as she sighed and tightened her leather gloves. "But Count Blackheart is the one who instigated the war, he forced the demon forces to make a move, forcing them to act and making them unable to prepare themselves completely," she continued as she looked at Uriel, noticing the amount of Mana within her had grown almost five folds compared to the last time she saw her.

They didn't know what to feel about that information, and it was always like that when it came to Rasmus. They didn't know if he was truly evil or a genius when he acted and schemed.

"What's the current situation over there, Great Sage?" Uriel asked, her voice was calm and raspy, her gaze was sharp like a snake, her new armor looked more sturdier than the previous ones, the swords on her back were all new since she broke everything from the previous war.

"Rasmus killed one of the three powerful demons like Kiel and Yaza. He has awakened his Orthias bloodline, and he's no longer human like us. Nemu became a powerful figure in Central Neva the moment Aurelia chose to strip her title as a Saint. Factions are being built between nations as we speak, and soon civil wars will happen from different ideologies, greed, and any other excuses they're going to use to kill each other," Lenin answered as she put her hands in her coat's pockets. "The Magic Tower has decided to separate ourselves from the Council, and I will be taking the side with Aurelia. The moment I'll announce that, that's when the war will break," she continued.

Xena furrowed her brows, surprised that the Magic Tower would make such a bold move knowing the situation was already heated in Central Neva.

"Great Sage, why do you take such extreme measures when the situation over there is already bad enough?" Xena asked as she crossed her arms, trying to understand behind Lenin's decision.

"Because I don't trust anyone," Lenin answered with a serious expression, staring into Xena's eyes. "The only one who I can trust right now is the one who has exposed the truth and took responsibility for it. I don't trust any nation, not until they're proven innocent," she added.

"Innocent, Great Sage?" Thalior furrowed his brows, finding Lenin's statement to be ambiguous.

Lenin took a deep breath and began to explain to them the truth about the Great Era of Neva centuries ago. She revealed about the lost civilization, the civilization that existed beyond the Blackcliffs. She made it brief and detailed at the same time, making sure the three of them understood the situation and the truth behind the peace that Central Neva achieved.

They were stunned when they found out the truth behind Erglade's rebellion. They realized that they had just prevented a man who was trying to reveal the dark and rotten truth. They realized the man that the world had condemned to be the evil one was in fact the one who was holding the key to the truth.

"Zevrathi..." Thalior muttered as he rubbed his chin. "That name... why does it sound so familiar?" He furrowed his brows, and couldn't remember where or when he had seen or heard that name before.

"Familiar?" Lenin narrowed her eyes, staring into Thalior's eyes.

"Yes, I believe I saw it in a record somewhere..." Thalior nodded his head, his eyes moved from one side to another in a slow motion as if he was searching through his memory. "It was a long time ago," he muttered.

Uriel furrowed her brows, tilting her head slightly, realizing that she also remembered that name from somewhere before. Lenin glanced at Uriel and noticed it, the face of someone who recognized something.

"Lady Uriel?" Lenin asked with her brows raised.

"I heard that name from the elders of the Sand Tower. I overheard their conversation about that name, I didn't bother to ask because it wasn't my place to ask. But I remember they were talking about the Sand Tower's master and their connection with the Zevrathi," Uriel answered with a disturbed expression.

There was only silence when they all looked at each other, trying to connect the dots. They began to understand how widely spread the Zevrathi's connection actually was.

"My... my..." Anastasha said with the folding fan covering her lower face. "What kind of conversation you're all having to paint those faces with something grim?" She raised her brows, folding the fan and revealed the smile that didn't reach her eyes.

Everyone turned around while Lenin tilted her head to look at Anastasha. They looked at her with a curious look on their faces, wondering if the Asghar family knew anything about the Zevrathi family. However, they didn't want to ask that question because Anastasha was on the same side as Rasmus. They didn't want to trust someone like her with that information.

"To suddenly pointing daggers at me, it seems I'm unwelcomed here," Anastasha smirked and unfolded the fan, covering her lower face. "So this is how Rasmus is being treated by those around him. How thrilling," she chuckled mischievously.

All of them didn't say a word and kept staring at her, and that was when Anastasha mirrored them. She stared at them coldly, her gaze pierced through each one of them, not showing any fear of their status.

"I hope you remember this moment because one day, when you're in a lot of trouble, don't be so surprised that I would stare at you just like this," Anastasha folded the fan, revealing nothing but a stoic expression. "Oh, and I know a few things about the Zevrathi family and where they are. But I believe that's none of your business now," she smiled as she turned around and walked away.

They knew Anastasha had been listening, and knew they didn't need to play her games, and yet somehow they were still being played by her.

"I hate politician..." Uriel sighed as she watched Anastasha enter the palace. "She never causes a problem, and yet her words and actions always stir something," she added.

"Those who know the truth always have the upper hand, and those who know the truth are often the ones who are using it for their own gain. You're right, Lady Uriel, who loves to be around with politician when they're telling the turth or just playing games?" Lenin responded as she crossed her hands.

"Let's get back to our discussion, Archduke," Lenin said as she rested her hand on her waist. "I really need your help. I need you, all of you to join me."

"You don't have to worry, Great Sage. We will answer the call, all of us will," Thalior answered as he nodded his head with understanding. "We will summon everyone and discuss this matter. Perhaps in a month, we will be ready," he added.

"A month..." Lenin hummed as she rubbed her chin. "Beggars can't be choosers. We will be waiting for your arrival, Archduke, Lady Uriel, Lady Xena," she looked at them and nodded.

The three of them nodded back at Lenin, assuring her that no matter what happened, they would be there in a month. They knew how fast the fire was burning in Central Neva, and they might be a bit too late, but they had to assure the safety of South Neva when they left to join the war.

"What's your plan now, Great Sage? Are you going back to Central Neva right away?" Xena asked with her brows raised.

"No, I'm here to retrieve my resource," Lenin answered as she shook her head and looked at the distance toward the east. "Lady Erlina and Carrion have prepared all the Mana stones that they have promised. I'm going to take them all and process them into magic tools. We are still preparing also," she explained.

"Take care, Great Sage. We can only wish you good luck for now," Thalior said, nodding with understanding.

Lenin nodded and then began to float and flew away with such immense speed that the shockwave enough to push the three of them back. They all watched her until she became a dot in the vast sky. They all took a deep breath before they turned around and walked to the palace.

Chapter 388 - 388: Conviction.

Aurelia walked the empty street, looking left and right but finding nobody, not even a pedestrian. Everything was abandoned, the houses, the market, and the city square that used to be filled with laughter and conversations. Everyone had left the Holy Nation, nobody stayed, not a single soul after what they found out about the truth. The silence was so thick it pressed against her chest. No bells rang, no prayers echoed, not even the chatter of children in the streets. The world had turned its back on this place. And yet, when she lifted her eyes, the Paladins still stood.

Aurelia took a deep breath and tried to push the emotions aside. She had to focus on what was in front of her, the line of the remaining Paladins who stayed. She was moved when they chose to stay because they believed that goodness wasn't about serving God, but to do what was right.

"My Lady..." The Paladin's captain, Ulric.

All the Paladins lowered their heads, even though their bodies were so used to go down on one knee. They was no longer serving a Saint, but they knew deep down Aurelia was still a Saint in their eyes. They knew that she was a true Saint for revealing the dark secret, bearing the consequences and the responsibilities.

Aurelia lowered her head and looked beyond the Paladins that were lined up in front of her. Her gaze was focused on the gate in the distance, her expression stiffened and serious.

"They're here?" Aurelia asked, looking at the cloudless blue sky.

"They're here, My Lady. We have counted and there are at least two thousands of knights and mages beyond the city wall," Ulric answered as he looked at Aurelia without any sign of fear and hesitation.

Aurelia took a shuddering breath as she nodded and walked toward the gate in the distance. All the Paladins parted ways, watching her walk past them before they raised their shields and follow her from behind. Their faces were hidden on the full helmet they wore, the white armor that made them different than steel-colored armor. They walked with their heads held high and their shoulders squared, ready to follow the order of the lady they served.

"Sir Esper and the rest are already on the frontline, Sir Ulric?" Aurelia asked, walking gracefully with the white robe that she wore, the robe where she removed the crest of the Holy Nation and the Angelis family's crest, a pure white gown.

"Yes, My Lady, Sir Esper is out there. His presence is enough to make them to hesitate to make a move and to attack the city," Ulric answered as he nodded.

There was tension in the air, and Aurelia could feel it, and it wasn't fear but rather something else. She looked over her shoulders, staring through the small gap in the Paladins' helmets. She didn't say a word,

but she understood their concerns, their hopes of not bathed their blades with human's blood because they had been using their weapons to fight demonic beasts, nothing more.

"Please, if you wish to stand down, please stand down..." Aurelia said with a gentle voice as she turned around to look at the Paladins behind her. "Your guilt will only pain me more than what the gnawing feeling in my heart, the fact that I will take the lives of others is already unbearable," she revealed with a softened gaze and voice.

There was only silence for a moment, the wind blew their capes, creating a heavy atmosphere as they stared Aurelia in the eyes. They could see nothing but the truth of fear and guilt, but they also saw determination, conviction, and acceptance. They knew that they weren't the only ones who were concerned about this situation, and they all stood their ground, not moving away even after Aurelia gave them a way out.

"Let the deaths of the lives you take will be the ones I will bear. All of you will become the Truthbearer, the people who will fight against the corruption and the dark mist that blinds those who are lost. You will not only take people's lives, but you will also become the savior of the people. Believe in me, and I will promise you that I will stay true to the truth and only the truth," Aurelia said with a serious expression before she turned around and continued her path toward the gate.

The Paladins didn't take a second to process, they followed her the moment she took a step forward.

Aurelia walked out of the gate and saw two dozen of Paladins standing in line with Esper at the front as their captain. When they saw her, they parted and let her walk past them, lowering their heads while the Paladins that Ulric commanded began to stand in formation. Esper lowered his head as he watched Aurelia walk toward him and stood beside him, staring at the army in the distance.

"Have they sent a messenger yet, Sir Esper?" Aurelia asked, her gaze was focused on the thousands in front of her.

"Not yet, My Lady. I believe they're waiting for you," Esper answered, and then saw a man on a horse began to move with two knights behind him follow the man. "It seems they're making a move now, My Lady," he pointed out.

Aurelia nodded and began to proceed in meeting with the enemy's leader. Esper and Ulric followed her from behind with their hands ready on the handles of their swords. They kept their eyes wide open to their surroundings, making sure there was no mages or archers that would do a surprise attack on them.

Once they faced each other, Aurelia watched the muscular and bearded old man jumping down from his horse. He didn't bother to lower his head to Aurelia since he didn't have a reason to, especially that Aurelia chose to strip down from all her status.

"Please walk away and let us take the city, Lady Aurelia. There's no need for an unnecessary battle because you don't have enough force to even protect your nation," the old man said with a loud and deep voice, trying to intimidate Aurelia.

"And who are you to tell me to get out of the land that I own, Sir?" Aurelia asked, staring into the man's eyes. "Would you abandon your home just because strangers gather at your door? No, you would fight for it, no matter their number."

"That land..." The leader pointed his finger at the Holy Nation behind the wall. "That land is built by the money of the people, the followers that you have deceived. That land belongs to ours, and we will take back what's ours," he said, his body towering Aurelia.

Ulric and Esper were staring at the man with a cold gaze and ready to cut his head off the moment he dared to touch or leaned even closer to Aurelia. On the other hand, Aurelia didn't flinch, didn't react to the man's words.

"Ours? Who? I don't see the other nations behind you, only one. I don't believe my land only belongs to one nation. So, no, I won't give this land to the nation you serve. Don't try to speak about the truth when you're only using it for your own gain, Sir," Aurelia responded, her gaze never leaving the man's eyes.

"If that's what you want, Lady Aurelia. Then we will proceed with what we came for, so please, be ready," the man said with a cold tone.

The man clenched his jaw and fists, but he knew he couldn't touch her, not in this moment. He decided to retreat, climbing up on his horse before he turned around and go back to the line. Aurelia watched

them leave before she turned around and walked back to be with the 56 Paladins that were going to defend the city against more than 2,000 soldiers.

Aurelia was surprised to see Serena outside the wall, standing in front of the Paladins with Videl beside her. She fastened her pace because she promised that she didn't want Serena to get involved in her battle.

"Saint Serena? Why are you out here?" Aurelia asked with a worried voice.

"I'm just wondering," Serena smiled gently at Aurelia before she turned around to look at the Paladins that behind her. "In a scale of one Paladin how many knights and mages they can handle on their own?" She asked.

"10 to 15 knights, Your Holiness," Ulric answered with confidence.

"And what about Swordmasters like you two can handle?" Serena asked with her brows raised, looking over her shoulder at Esper and Ulric.

"I can handle a hundred knights with confident, and that also apply with Lord Esper, Your Holiness," Ulric answered with confidence.

"So that's roughly a thousand people," Serena hummed as she placed her hand on Videl's pauldron. Videl was wearing an all-black full body armor, covering his whole body and identity from others. "Then I'll lend you this knight of mine. He can easily handle the remaining half of the enemy's force," she smiled softly.

"Saint Serena, I don't want you to be a part of my battle. I don't want you to do that..." Aurelia said with a frown on her face.

"And I'm not planning to, Aurelia. But he's not a part of me, so that doesn't count, isn't it?" Serena chuckled softly. "Please, use him. He would love to help you," she said as she placed her hand on Aurelia's shoulder.

Aurelia shoulders relaxed a bit, knowing that protecting the city wouldn't be impossible anymore but guaranteed.

"Thank you, Saint Serena," Aurelia smiled gently as she held Serena's hand on her shoulder.

"Good luck, ladies and gentlemen. May God be with you," Serena snapped her fingers and used her Divine power to enhance everyone's physical ability by two folds before she walked away and went back inside the wall.

Chapter 389 - 389: Quality over quantity.

Aurelia watched as the fireballs, icicles, and wind cutter flew toward them. She clasped her hands, creating a divine barrier and blocking all the magic spells. She could do it all day long, but she knew the moment the enemy force got close, her barrier would be useless.

"Raise your shields!" Ulric shouted as he raised his sword and watched hundreds of cavalry charge toward them, closing the distance.

The Paladins stood side by side, creating an arch formation in front of the gate entrance. They raised their shields tall enough that the horses wouldn't be able to jump over them.

"Hold!" Esper raised his sword, looking through the small gap in between the two shields. "Hold!" He repeated as he tightened his grip on his sword.

The moment the cavalry was only a few meters away from them, Esper pointed his sword to the front. His command was loud and clear, and the Paladins who held the shields began to dash forward and bashed the horses.

The horses got pushed and knocked down by the sheer force and strength of the Paladins. The moment the other cavalry slowed down because of the horses and knights on the ground, the Paladins that held the shields began to move aside, creating openings. The remaining Paladins charged through those openings and slashed their swords on the knights on the ground and the cavalry that had lost their speed and momentum.

Ulric and Esper ran past through the chaos, going further to the front. They coated their swords and bodies with Aura, releasing a sequence of slash waves at the enemy's back lines. They didn't hold back and watched a dozen knights just lose their limbs or be barely attached to their bodies from those slash waves.

They were both immediately surrounded by knights as arrows and magic spells bombarded them. Their Aura was powerful enough to endure low tier magic spells and arrows. They were unbothered as they began to move separately, dividing the enemy force.

With the enemy force being divided into three, that gave a huge advantage to the Paladins. The ones with the shields began to place their shields on each other's backs before they joined the battle. They all moved in sync almost as if they all shared one brain.

"Amazing..." Serena said, watching the battle from on top of the wall with Astrea. "I believe the enemy will regret raising their swords at the ones who have been protecting the people from demonic beasts," she smiled as she watched the enemy formations have been broken.

"They were chosen from the best amongst the best, elite amongst the elites. They were trained to fight something that humans should be incapable of fighting," Astrea nodded her head, watching the casualty from the enemy's force increase while Aurelia's force was none.

"But for how long? This is just the first nation who dares to make a bold move toward the Holy Nation. Soon, there will be more of them, and some of them even form an alliance to take this city," Serena asked as she stared at Astrea. "Nothing is impossible, and this city is too big for Aurelia to defend," she added and focused on the battlefield again.

Ulric and Esper were being bombarded by magic spells, slowly chipping their stamina and Aura. However, that wouldn't be enough to stop them, not even when they were surrounded by dozens of knights.

"I'm not the one who lead the army. I don't know the answer to that question, Saint Serena," Astrea answered and shook her head.

Daryus walked up the stairs with a bowl of medicine in his hands. He slowly stood behind Astrea and offered the medicine to her.

"Thank you, Doctor," Astrea smiled and slowly drank the medicine that tasted so bitter that it lingered for hours in her mouth. "However, Saint Serena, I know for sure that Videl wouldn't let that happen since I believe he's tasked by Count Blackheart to keep this place safe, is he not?" She turned around to look at Serena.

Astrea walked to the edge and placed her hands on the stone railing.

"Doctor Daryus stayed behind because he had a purpose, and that purpose was to treat my condition. You and Videl on the other hand have no reason to stay, but you two did, and I believe this is what you actually here for, isn't it, Saint Serena?" Astrea asked, staring into Serena's eyes.

Serena only smiled as a respond, not admitting or denying Astrea's accusation. She then raised her brows, pointing at the distance. She pointed at the big magic formation that appeared to have been prepared beforehand.

"That magic..." Astrea muttered with her eyes narrowed. "Magnify spell..." she revealed as she watched the enemy knights run away from Esper and Ulric.

Serena tilted her head, not understanding what it was. It hadn't been a year ever since Lilith possessed Serena's body, so her knowledge of magic was close to none. However, the moment she saw the fireball that was cast inside the magnify spell, the size became five times bigger.

The moment the fireball was released, the sheer speed was faster than a normal fireball. The fireball hit the ground near Ulric, and the explosion was enough to shake the ground and make the wall tremble.

The thick smoke made it hard to see if Ulric survived or not. Once the smoke dispersed, the enemy was shocked that he was still standing. However, that magic took a toll on his body, and he knew he couldn't get hit by that again.

Before Ulric could take a breather, the knights surrounded him and began to attack him. He dodged, repelled, and blocked attacks as he did counterattacks until he managed to free himself from the enemy's formation. However, the moment he escaped, the knights had already run away and another magnified fireball flew toward him.

Esper suddenly appeared behind Ulric and threw him away before the fireball could reach the ground. Esper created a wide Aura on his blade, creating a shield-like Aura barrier. However, the magic spell was too powerful that his Aura barrier dispersed on impact and he fell to the ground hard from the blast.

"That hurts..." Esper groaned as he sat up, surrounded by thick smoke.

Aurelia watched those two with a worried expression, knowing that she could help them. Unfortunately, she couldn't use her Divine power that far, and if she tried to go there, she only endangered herself and messed up the formation because the Paladins would do anything to protect her.

"Someone! Tell Sir Ulric and Sir Esper to fall back!" Aurelia ordered as she clenched her fists, hoping those two would be safe.

A paladin heeded the order and began to run to tell Esper and Ulric to fall back. He avoided the knights' attacks and let his comrades open a path for him. However, he was blocked by seven knights and they attacked him simultaneously.

The paladin got stabbed in the back, the blade piercing through his chest. He didn't stop and used Aura to prevent the bleeding. He swung his sword around and cut their throats, then ran toward Esper and Ulric, giving Aurelia's order to them.

"Go! I'll protect your back!" Ulric said as he blocked the arrows, protecting Esper who helped the Paladin walk.

They came back safely and ordered all the Paladins to fall back, creating the same phalanx formation. Immediately, Aurelia created a Divine barrier, protecting them from the magnified spell that the enemy had prepared for them.

When they were busy blocking the enemy and holding the line, Videl walked past Aurelia who was treating the injured. She looked up at him and knew that this would be the moment where things would go in their favor.

Videl tapped the Paladin that was holding the shield with everything he had. When the Paladin looked over his shoulder and saw the black clad full body armor behind him, he knew what to do. He immediately pulled his shield away, giving enough space for Videl to walk past him.

Videl casually walked past the shield and grabbed the knight in the head that tried to breach in. A simple clench of his fist was enough to crush and explode the knight's head. That was enough to put fear on the enemy, and knew he was a threat.

They attacked Videl at the same time, but the moment their swords and spears hit his armor, they all shattered into pieces. They were petrified, and before they knew it, their heads had rolled to the ground. Videl raised his sword which had been bathed in the blood of the enemy. They were terrified of him and immediately retreated, knowing it was impossible to win against someone like him.

Videl created a fire in his left hand and the moment he slammed his left hand to the ground, a sea of flames devoured everything in front of him in a cone-shaped area. All the knights screamed as their armor began to melt, combined with their burned skin.

The sea of flames spread widely and nobody could survive that. When Videl clenched his left fist, the sea of flames suddenly stopped spreading and was being sucked back into his fist. Those who were being burned alive got devoured by the flames once again, killing them in the most painful way.

Videl turned the flame into a fireball then threw it toward the enemy's back line where the mages and hunters were. Before the fireball could reach the ground, he snapped his finger. The fireball exploded and created a massive dome of fire, killing everyone inside.

The horror and the screams that the Paladins heard, it was enough to make their throats dry. They couldn't believe what they saw, couldn't believe someone like him was on their side. They realized when Serena said that he was enough to deal with half of the enemy force, it wasn't a lie.

"Did we just win? Just like that?" Ulric asked in disbelief.

The Paladins lowered their shields and parted for Videl to walk past them. They watched him in silence, both in fear and awe as Videl walked through the gate.

"I believe so..." Esper answered as he watched the enemy retreat

Aurelia turned around to look at Videl, realizing that this whole time Rasmus had a powerful butler by his side. She didn't know what to feel about that, but she was relieved that they had won the battle, and that was what mattered.

Chapter 390 - 390: Ambiguity.

Aurelia watched the Paladins dug the ground for a mass burial for the fallen knights. She had to see, she had to see the cause of the battle, the bodies that were no longer recognizable. She had to witness the cost of war, she had to bear all the responsibility for their deaths even though she felt like her chest was being squeezed from guilt.

"My Lady, you don't have to be here to watch everything," Ulric said as he looked at Aurelia with a worried expression.

"No, I have to be here. I will remember their faces... at least their remains. I'm responsible for their deaths, I caused this to them," Aurelia answered, her face was unreadable, but her voice was filled with guilt and pain.

The Paladins could feel the emotions within Aurelia, and they respected her for trying to stay strong. They wanted to assure her that they shared responsibility, and that she wasn't alone in this, but they chose to stay quiet. They focused on digging the ground and wrapped the lump of meat that had been molded together with the melted steel with cloths.

Once they buried all the bodies, Aurelia clasped her hands together, standing in front of the mass grave. She prayed for their souls with the Paladins behind her and Serena beside her. Videl secretly devoured the souls of the dead, making sure they became food for his strength and power. If only Aurelia knew that her prayer was pointless because the Devil himself had stolen souls before they could meet their maker, she would feel devastated.

Aurelia walked back into the city with Serena beside her, there was only silence between the two. However, Aurelia felt nothing but comfort from Serena's presence, no judgment, no words to justify her deeds, no assurance, just the ministry of presence.

"There will be more of them to come, more people will try to take over the city, more bodies to bury. This battle will be heard, this battle will place me in the dark, the people will try to get rid of me for what I have done here today..." Aurelia muttered as she walked on the empty street. "They will treat me as a threat, an enemy of the people, a fallen Saint that has gone crazy, a figure to get rid off..." She sighed and looked up at the sky with exhaustion written all over her face.

"It's not them that you should be worried about, Aurelia. It's those behind them, the ones who provoke them to fight you while they're busy reaping all the benefits to themselves. The Prime Lords, they're going to make us fight each other while they're using it to strengthen themselves while weakening us," Serena responded, walking beside Aurelia with a calm expression and eyes closed. "But humans are foolish. They're always moved by emotions, blinded by them until it's too late to realize it," she added.

"I have to convince them somehow, but I know it's impossible. It's not that they won't listen or can't understand, but that they have their own people to protect and to listen to. Brute force won't make them listen, they will only retaliate against us even more. I need to go out there, Saint Serena, I need to be out there to speak not to their ears but to their hearts..." Aurelia said and stopped walking, staring into the distance with her brows furrowed, knowing it wouldn't be easy and it would be close to impossible.

"And how are you going to do that?" Serena opened her eyes and looked at Aurelia with her brows raised.

"I have a plan," Aurelia answered as she clenched her fist.

Serena could see the determination and confidence in Aurelia's eyes. She chuckled softly as she looked at the city, completely abandoned and yet she could imagine that soon enough it would be filled with people.

"Now, Aurelia. What are you going to do with that corpse? The Zevrathi's body that your ancestor stole and preserve so their descendants could take a piece of the flesh and ate it to gain power," Serena asked with her brows raised.

"I'm going to burn her body down until there's nothing remaining but ashes. I'm going to send the ashes into the sea so there would be no trace of her," Aurelia answered without hesitation. "I know for sure those people earlier wanted to possess her body so they could gain power from it. The demons also want her body for whatever reason, and I'm not going to let that happen. I won't let anyone have her," she continued.

"Wouldn't that be a waste? Why don't you take the remaining power from her body and make it yours?" Serena asked, crossing her arms.

"No, I don't want any of that power. I'm not a hypocrite," Aurelia answered, shaking her head repeatedly.

"Then let me have it," Serena smiled, her smile didn't reach her eyes as she stared into Aurelia's eyes. "Since you don't want it, then give it to me," her smile widened.

Aurelia was speechless for a moment, not knowing what to say because of how complicated it was more than she could expect. If she gave the body to Serena, she knew that Serena was Rasmus's people, and she didn't trust Serena with such power. However, if she denied Serena's request, that also put fear and anxiety in her. She was afraid that Serena would change her mind about her. She didn't want Serena to avoid her when Serena was the one who seemed to understand her deeply with her struggle.

"I don't trust you, Saint Serena," Aurelia answered as she stared into Serena's eyes. "I know nothing much about your past, what's your goal, and why you chose to follow Count Rasmus. I can't risk for something that I might regret," she explained without looking away from Serena's gaze.

Serena chuckled softly as she closed her distance, slowly cupping Aurelia's cheeks. She leaned closer until their faces were only a breath away from each other.

"Good. Never let someone decide what you should do no matter who they are, nobody..." Serena muttered with a gentle smile on her face before she pulled away and let go of Aurelia's cheeks. "Now then, shall we burn the body?" She tilted her head and her brows were raised.

Aurelia gulped nervously because nobody had ever stood so close to her like that. She shook her head and tried to brush off the closeness from her mind. She cleared her throat and nodded with understanding, thinking of burning the body as soon as possible since there were too many sides that wanted to possess it.

They both went back to the palace and went to the hidden passage where the Angelis family had kept the body of a Zevrathi for centuries. They looked at the body of a woman with straight brunette hair who was lying on the big table stone. The body looked like a woman who was sleeping so soundly.

"Saint Serena, wasn't your situation similar to her?" Aurelia asked, staring at Serena who was standing across from the table stone. "Your body was preserved for more than half a century, right? Your body didn't decay while my grandmother's body decayed over time," she pointed out.

"What are you trying to imply, Aurelia?" Serena tilted her head, staring into Aurelia's eyes.

"I'm just wondering if the Angelis family's divine power is because we borrow the power from this body, the moment we die, we lose the power and that's why our bodies decay over time. Since yours wasn't decaying based on Count Rasmus's words, and I know he wouldn't lie, that means your divine power is real, a true Saint," Aurelia explained as she looked at the dead body on the table, the smooth and pale skin of the body making her want to touch it. "I don't know about the Sancticus family, if their sainthood is real or not. What I'm trying to say here, what if..." She paused, not sure how to say it.

Serena slowly raised her brows, staring at Aurelia, waiting for her to finish her sentence.

"What if, the one and only true Saint has the Zevrathi's blood running through their veins? What if... you're a Zevrathi but you don't know it..." Aurelia said as she stared into Serena's eyes.

There was only silence after Aurelia spoke of her thoughts and uttered her speculation. Aurelia was waiting for any reaction, but Serena didn't give any, and that made her more anxious and sounded so stupid. However, it could also mean the other way around, the fact that Serena didn't answer immediately and didn't show any reaction, Aurelia might have poked into something that she shouldn't have.

"Hmm..." Serena hummed, breaking the silence as she leaned against the stone table, crossing her arms on top of it and stared at the dead body in front of her. "I wonder..." She stared at Aurelia with a smile that didn't reach her eyes.

Aurelia held her breath, didn't like the answer that Serena gave at all. She didn't like the ambiguity of Serena's answer, and that would only haunt her even more. At that moment, she realized why Serena chose to follow Rasmus, and the answer was the ambiguity that lurked around Serena. She knew she could trust Serena, and she should be careful around her.