

Evil 421

Chapter 421 - 421: The future.

"That's..." Aristoria muttered as she leaned back and rubbed her lower lip with her index finger and middle finger. She tried to process everything that Aris had told her about Demons, Prime Lords, The Devil, Satan, Angels, Hell, Heaven, and God. "You're telling me that my child, Rasmus is making friends with the Devil? When the Devil is fighting against his own kind? The demons, the so-called Prime Lords, and their master Satan?" She furrowed her brows with a confused look.

Aris told only half of the full story, and Aristoria knew that as well but chose to not pry on it. The two of them were trying to get each other in their palms with the information that they both had.

"It seems the world is in chaos, more than ever..." Aristoria hummed, her eyes narrowed as she stared blankly at the distance. "There were events similar to this that caused the extinction of civilizations. Of course, you already know about that since you're an Aristoria. However, this time, it seems different, more devastating, and seems... immediate..." she muttered.

"Are you thinking that this would be the last event? The final chapter of the book?" Aris asked with her brows raised.

"Listening to what you said, and the fact it's revealed that we are merely... toys to be played with by the omnipotent being. Not only that, the fact that the Devil, Satan, and all those powerful beings being sent down here, it does look like this might be the final chapter of the book," Aristoria nodded and hummed.

There was only silence between them, even the True Dragon breathed quietly almost like the strong wind on the summit. Aris could see in Aristoria's eyes, trying to connect the dots and finding the connection to something that she already knew.

"The plan, Aristoria. You promised me to tell me the plan on how to prevent the past from happening. Now you know the threat is real, and the possibility of these names I mentioned. They're powerful enough to kill a True Dragon without batting an eye, so what was the plan you have prepared for us, the three of us?" Aris asked with a stoic expression, still staring right into Aristoria's eyes.

Aristoria was still deep in thoughts until she finally glanced at Aris, who was waiting for an answer.

"The plan..." Aristoria paused as she shook her head. "The plan is gone now," she answered with a serious expression.

"Gone? What do you mean by that?" Aris furrowed her brows with a confused look.

"It means the plan has gone astray, and I knew this when both of you came to this void realm. Or to be exact... it's when my child awakened his Orthias blood," Aristoria answered, crossing his legs and arms. "It's something that only I can see it. I can see the future, not mine, not his, not anyone, but the Dragon's Blood in Rasmus's body, it connects to me. It allows me to see what kind of man he is in the future by looking at him from the present," she explained.

Aris narrowed her eyes, couldn't understand what Aristoria was talking about or what she meant by that.

"You don't understand? Let me put it simply. If someone is hungry, you can see it in their faces being grumpy, pale, and lifeless, especially in their eyes. Then after they ate something they loved until they were satiated, you could see how happy they were. You read their faces and eyes, and that was how I saw him. I saw his future self while he saw still a small and powerless baby. The way he stared at me, the way he reacted to my words with his expressions were unlike how a baby should. I knew at that moment he was from the future," Aristoria explained with a distant gaze.

Aris hummed and nodded, understanding what Aristoria meant by that. It was basically that Rasmus possessed his own body in the past, and Rasmus had already told her about that when he awakened his Orthias blood.

"But what do you mean when you say the plan was ruined the moment Rasmus awakened his Orthias blood? Isn't that exactly what you want?" Aris asked with her brows furrowed and head tilted slightly.

"Yes, you're right, but something about him has changed as if he has become a completely different person. The child that I gave birth, it was no longer him," Aristoria stared into Aris' eyes. "As a mother, I could feel it in my guts that my child had died, and someone else took over his body," she pointed out.

Aris narrowed her eyes and remembered when Rasmus told his story of when he was brought to hell by Vidal. She wondered if that was the trigger when Rasmus lost his old self and became someone knew.

She hadn't told Aristoria about that part, and planned to hide it from her, however, it seemed that Aristoria had decided to open up and she knew she should feed Aristoria with information that could satisfy her so Aristoria would open up more.

"Rasmus was brought to hell by the Devil. I didn't know the details, but that was when the Devil offered him a deal," Aris said, staring into the True Dragon's eyes that seemed to be judging her. "The Devil brought him to hell when he was on the brink of death in his bed. Long story short, the Devil helped him get back to his feet, but I don't know what exactly happened back then, especially the conversation that those two had in Hell. I know for sure that was when Rasmus became someone knew, someone different, and I believe that's why you believed that he wasn't your child anymore," she explained.

"No mortals can handle such scenery in hell, Aristoria, nobody, not even me, not even Rullein. None of us could withstand that even though it was just a memory, but he could, he was there in hell in person, not through memory like how Rullein and I did it. After all that, he's still sane and capable of thinking, capable of reasoning, and capable of helping others when they deserve it. That's why, I believe that he's changed and not because someone else took your child's body," Aris added.

"How can you be so sure about that?" Aristoria narrowed her eyes, still not convinced even after Aris told her the story.

"Because when he read Ergalde's journal, he was deeply affected by the content. He looked saddened, disturbed, and he looked like someone who was grieving. I'm sure because he's still the same person as the one you gave birth," Aris answered with a serious expression.

Aristoria hummed and nodded, this time she was convinced from that reasoning alone.

"I see, so he's still the same," Aristoria faintly smiled as she looked away. She looked relieved when she found out that she was wrong about that. "But still, I didn't expect him to change like this. The plan is in ruin because I can't control him at all because I know that he doesn't trust me at all," she added.

"Yes, you are right. Rasmus doesn't believe you at all because he knew that you're hiding something from him, from us," Aris answered with a serious expression.

"He has grown so much that he doesn't believe in anyone, doesn't he? He had gone through a lot of hardship, and I don't blame him that he doesn't believe in me. After all, I was never there in his life, and he didn't know much about me," Aristoria said with a weak smile on her face.

There was a silence between them once again, but then Aris cleared her throat and fixed her sitting.

"You said that you could see his future because he could possess his own body from the past. When was the last time you saw him? The future him from his young body," Aris asked with her brows raised.

"The last time I saw him was when he could walk for the first time, but he didn't speak to me at all. I could see it in his eyes, and I know something had happened to him because the way he looked at me, he looked at me with resentment," Aristoria answered with a bitter face. "I don't know what happened, and why he looked at me like that, but I knew that something had happened in the future, your future with him," she added.

"He resented you? Why?" Aris asked with her brows furrowed.

Aristoria smiled and slowly looked away, enjoying the scenery for a moment before she glanced at Aris with a cold expression.

"Who knows, perhaps something happened to you because of me," Aristoria answered with a serious expression. "Maybe that was when I took over your body, but who knows. Maybe it could be because of something else," she added.

Aris was disturbed by that and didn't know what to say about that.

"If I could prevent it... do you think that's possible to change the future since I know now?" Aris asked in a soft voice.

"Or perhaps it's because you know now that it's the reason that Rasmus resented me in the future, Aris. It's not that you can change the future or not, but whatever you choose here and later, it will lead to there eventually. Maybe the future is predetermined after all," Aristoria answered with a mocking chuckle, not toward her or Aris, but toward the future that she had seen.

Aris took a deep breath and exhaled deeply as she stared at the True Dragon's eyes, thinking about Aristoria's and Lilith's words about destiny.

Chapter 422 - 422: The end is near.

Aris walked past the city gate and could see the gazes on her nape. She didn't bother to look back, there was nobody behind her that she wanted to look at. She slowly looked up at the dawn sky where the sun was about to rise from the east.

"Aris..." Serena called as she walked toward her gracefully in her white robe.

Aris paused and slowly looked over her shoulder at Serena. The gentle smile that Serena put on her face made Aris feel calm. She didn't know if it was because Serena knew about her problems and shared something similar.

"Do you remember the last thing I said to you?" Serena asked, standing in front of Aris, looking up at Aris' eyes.

"The lock can be unlocked with all types of keys. Whatever I choose to open the key, that will be my truth," Aris answered, staring into Serena's eyes as she nodded.

"Yes, but I can see it in your eyes that you're uncertain about that as well, aren't you?" Serena chuckled softly with a smirk on her face. "I'm not asking you to believe that, I'm asking you to be true to yourself. It doesn't matter if you still have an existential crisis or if you have found out who you are. Every choice you make, it defines who you are," she muttered and placed her hand on Aris' shoulder.

Aris glanced at Serena's right hand on her left shoulder before she turned her gaze toward Serena. She already knew that, and she had been doing that ever since she came to exist in this world.

"Fate and the future, are they predetermined?" Aris asked, asking the question that had been bothering her more than her own identity.

"Well..." Serena took a deep breath and exhaled deeply as she looked at Aurelia, Novia, and Alexander that were seeing Aris off. "Usually people ask about something to someone who has experience in that matter for an answer. However, I don't think this matter should use that method," she chuckled as she looked into Aris' eyes.

"What do you mean?" Aris asked back with a stoic expression.

"Because most of it is usually affected by bias. Right now, the only person that has an extreme bias on such a question is me. You don't want an answer from me, Aris," Serena tightened her grip on Aris' shoulder. "You should ask this matter to Videl or Rasmus..." She muttered, her voice barely above a whisper as she stared at Novia who was trying to listen to their conversation and made sure that she didn't hear her last few words.

Aris tilted her head and furrowed her brows when Serena suggested that Rasmus could answer that question. Out of all people, she knew that Rasmus wasn't the type of person who would be capable of answering such divine questions.

"What makes you think he knows the answer?" Aris asked.

"You'll be surprised," Serena muttered as she gently squeezed Aris' upper arm. "When I told him my story, I felt seen, understood, and a sense of relief. He's someone who's so close to deciphering the mind of God because he doesn't linger and think with emotions. His mind is clear and sharp, and you should know that as well because nobody in this world can stay sane after witnessing Hell. Someone who's that capable, they're capable of understanding and see divine beings. Which is why Videl chose him in the first place, no?" she smirked and cupped Aris' cheek.

Aris hummed and nodded with understanding as she watched Serena's hand fall to Serena's side.

"Well, it's up to you though. Would you like to find the answer from Videl or do you want to ask this question to Rasmus? Either way, they both will have a similar answer to your question," Serena said as she took a few steps back away from Aris. "But, I think we both know who you trust the most, or should I say the only person you trust," she chuckled softly.

Aris put in a bit of a smirk, knowing that Serena was right about it. She didn't want to admit it, but she trusted Rasmus more than anyone in this world. Rasmus was the only one who never tried to deceive her and always gave her all the truth that she asked for.

When Aris was about to say something, she felt chills all over her body, and it wasn't just her that felt that. Serena squirmed in fear while Novia, Aurelia, and Alexander fell to their knees with all the Paladins and the townspeople in the city. They all screamed in panic, they didn't know what was happening, but the fear that they felt, it was like they were about to get killed.

Aris looked at the sky that turned dark red in the far distance with the dark clouds that covered the sky. Serena turned around, and looked at the sky, knowing what it was because she had seen that kind of phenomenon all the time back in Hell.

"They are... descending..." Serena muttered with her eyes wide open.

"Who?" Aris narrowed her eyes as she kept staring at the red sky.

"The fallen.... all of them have descended to this world..." Serena shook her head in disbelief, shocked, and speechless.

"You mean the Fallen Watchers?" Aris furrowed her brows, glancing at Serena before she turned around when she felt Lenin, Marina, and Videl's presence that reached the city gate. Lenin and Marina collapsed while Videl walked casually toward her and Serena.

"Yes, hundreds of them, even close to a thousand perhaps..." Serena clenched her fist, remembering all the traumas she had when they came to visit her. She had a lot of bitter and disturbing memories with them. "If they have descended, meaning that Satan has regained the power, at least half of it..." she pointed out.

"I should have known..." Videl muttered, his eyes glowed red underneath his helmet as he stared at the red sky. "Satan managed to make a bargain with Him," he crossed his arms, his expression was cold, no smile, no mockery, just a serious expression.

"Isn't that Satan's specialty? After all, Satan is God's accuser... always getting what Satan wanted in exchange giving what God wanted," Serena hummed and nodded. "But that's not the issue, right? The fact that God accepted the bargain and gave Satan what it needed, meaning that you're about to get in trouble, Videl," she glanced at Videl with a serious expression.

"Trouble? I have been expecting this to happen," Videl said, feeling the demonic energy in the air. "But I didn't expect this to happen this early. I wonder if this happens because of Rasmus since he has been sailing smoothly from the very beginning... or is it because they have finally found me after I removed the mark from your body," he glanced at Aris.

Aris thought about it and realized that she might be the main reason as to why Satan had decided to go all out. It was because of removing the mark that revealed Videl's location and existence in this world. However, she knew that Rasmus knew that this would happen, and she remembered that Rasmus knew the risks and consequences, but chose to let her get what she needed.

"So, God chose to take this matter to another step? That's the second time God has taken this matter personally, isn't it? I must say, Rasmus is really capable of making things hard for Him, and I'm loving it..." Serena smirked as she stared at the distance.

Aris turned to look at Serena and then at the red sky that was slowly fading away. The feeling of the sky was falling onto them, and the fact it happened far away in the North, it made her realize how powerful Satan was, and she wasn't sure if she could defeat her anymore. She wondered how Rasmus reacted to this phenomenon and what kind of thought that he had.

"What was that?!" Aurelia approached Serena as soon as she could stand up and walk. "What's happening over there?!" She asked, her face pale and her voice shaky.

Serena stared at Aurelia and then Lenin and the others who followed her from behind. She looked them in the eyes for a few seconds until they were unable to hide their nervousness.

"That? That is... the gate that connects both worlds between the world of the living and the world of the damned. What you have just witnessed, that was the presences of hundreds and even a thousand of Fallen Watchers, the whole army of the Fallen Watchers that have descended to this world," Serena answered with a cold smile that didn't reach her eyes. "The end is near, ladies and gentlemen," she warned.

All of them gulped as they stared at Serena with fear written all over their faces.

At the same time, inside a cave on the mountain, Rasmus stood on the edge of the cliff with his father's journal in his hand. His eyes stared at the distance where the red sky suddenly made all animals run in fear and birds flew away aimlessly.

"You were right..." Rullein appeared from the puff of black smoke behind Rasmus. "The moment they found out Videl's location and existence, they immediately reacted to him," she said as she stood beside Rasmus.

"Of course they are, he's the Devil after all," Rasmus answered as he nodded.

"Do you know Videl's real name? Satan is a name, Michael is a name, and every Fallen Watcher and Angel has a name. But I'm curious why the Devil doesn't use his real name," Rullein glanced at Rasmus with her brows raised.

"His name? It's Iblis..." Rasmus muttered, and immediately he could feel Videl's presence behind him, wrapping Videl's hands around his neck.

Chapter 423 - 423: The Redeemed, the Saved.

"You were sent my Master to assist me here, Kiel?" Nemu looked at Kiel, wearing a ragged brown robe with a hood that covered his upper half of his face. "Or are you here for something else?" He asked.

"I came here to inform you about Rasmus Blackheart and the Devil. Rasmus Blackheart is the human soul from Earth that the Devil chose to challenge Him. We have found out the Devil's location, and wherever he is, he's anywhere near him," Kiel answered and glanced at the figure wearing a red robe and a white porcelain mask, Deja. "I came here to assist you, and we have heard the current situation here, and the deal you made with Rasmus," Kiel added.

Nemu hummed, rubbing his porcelain mask that he wore before he pointed at the couch. The two of them sat across from each other, Deja had been sitting there and hadn't moved a muscle like a statue.

"You have awakened your full potential here, Deja. Our Master wants you to be careful because you're an important asset," Kiel looked at Deja with a serious expression. "She wants you to leave everyone behind no matter what if things don't go well down here. It's an order, Deja," Kiel said in a gentle and soothing voice as he stared into Deja's glowing red eyes with his glowing red eyes.

Deja tilted his head to the side, cracking something underneath the robe.

"Just me? Azel has also awakened his full potential," Deja asked, his demonic voice vibrating the air in the dark room.

"Well, Azel is a different breed than any of us. He's the only one who's capable of handling ten Archangels on his own. But that's not the case here," Kiel said as he leaned back and stared at the beautiful temple that Nemu followers had built for him. "It's because Rasmus Blackheart is here in this continent with the Devil, that Orthias, and that mysterious being that could devour one of us," he pointed out.

"Well, Nemu had made a deal with Rasmus Blackheart, he wanted us to wage war with humans. That alone is good enough to say that he's supporting our cause, and so far, he hasn't done anything behind our back and disappear," Deja responded with his arms crossed. "You also made a deal with him before, and you could read mortals' minds. You said that he didn't lie back then and you reported that your failure was because you didn't expect him to have powerful allies. But we learned all that from you, and we knew the Devil's identity. We should be fine, don't you think?" He asked, tilting his head.

Kiel hummed as he rubbed his mask, thinking about what Deja said. He remembered the deal he had made with Rasmus, and he could see the resentment and the desire to bring humankind to destruction. He wasn't wrong about it, and knew it was the truth as well since he was gifted by God with such an ability. However, he felt something was amiss, and he knew that if Nemu and Deja weren't being careful, they would end up like him and Yaza.

"You shouldn't take his words so lightly. He forces you to wage war with the humans because he wants you two to get weakened. There's a reason why he believes that humans are capable of exhausting your force, and that's something you should consider, Nemu, Deja," Kiel said and stared at both of them back and forth.

Nemu hummed and thought about what Kiel said, which made sense. He had thought about that as well, and hearing that Kiel had a similar conclusion, it gave him relief.

"We are glad that you're here, Kiel. You're going to be a big help for our cause here," Nemu said as he nodded with understanding.

"Our Master chose me because she knew that I was capable enough to assist you two here. Also, I believe it's an act of redemption for my failure in South Neva, and I won't let this one fall to Rasmus' hands again," Kiel said, his words contained unspoken anger. "That's enough about me, and tell me what's your plan now? Why haven't you made a move to wage war with humans yet?" He asked.

"We are still thinking about how we are going to do that because we haven't gotten ourselves powerful enough and haven't gotten enough influence from humans. We need more time to make them turn to us," Nemu answered.

"Our other plan was to let Adrel become the enemy of humankind in this continent, but unfortunately he died," Deja added, leaning back and staring at Kiel.

"But now that you're here, I think we can use this for a new plan, making you as our enemy and force the humans to come to us for help," Nemu suggested. "You know the history of these humans more than we do, and I believe you're capable of making them fall faster than we ever could," he added.

"That's fine by me, and I'm here to work under your command, so I'll do what you need me to do," Kiel nodded with understanding as he stood up. "What do you want me to do now?" He asked.

Nemu and Deja looked at each other, thinking for a moment before Nemu turned his head toward Kiel.

"The Refenus Kingdom, that territory has been untouched by humans. There are still a lot of survivors there who chose to stay, and I believe you can use them as your army, turning them into your minions," Nemu answered. "You need to do it as soon as possible and gain as much force as you can in less than a month because I have a feeling that Rasmus has grown impatient from waiting for the war to begin," he pointed out.

Kiel nodded with understanding and swirled his hand, opening a portal behind him. All the candles were extinguished and immediately the withering sound of demons could be heard inside the room. All the demons flew and entered Kiel's body from his back, ripping his ragged robe and forcing their way inside his body.

It took Kiel a whole hour to finally let the last demon enter his body while Nemu and Deja watched. Kiel exhaled deeply and closed the portal behind him as the candles lit up again.

"I'll take my leave now, I will be back in a month with a force that will threaten this whole continent," Kiel said, his voice cold and serious. "I might need a few Demon Kings on my sides to command the mortals and the demons," he asked.

"We will send a few of them to you later, we will give you the best ones," Nemu nodded with understanding.

"Thank you, but there's one other thing," Kiel paused as he stared at his hands, feeling the surge of power within him that grew exponentially. "Our Master wants you two to leave this continent after you get enough resources. She doesn't want you two to fall for Rasmus' tricks or even die by his hands because she believes that the Devil and Rasmus want to eliminate us when he can. By now, they should have realized of what had happened in the north, and they would do anything they could to reduce our numbers," he added.

"I see, that's true and thank you for telling us this because we would never thought of that possibility," Nemu nodded. "Our main goals are to take as many souls as we can and the second one is to unravel the truth behind the Zevrathi family, who they are, and where are they," he explained.

"And how far have you unraveled that?" Kiel asked, tilting his head and stared at both of them.

"Not much," Deja shook his head slowly. "They are being secretive and somehow the one who knows about their Master is given such power, a mark that similar to ours but different," he revealed.

"A mark that similar to ours? From the fallen?" Kiel was mildly surprised. "From one of ours?" He asked.

Nemu and Deja shook their heads, and that made Kiel curious.

"It could be one of ours, but not the one that swore their loyalty to our master, but to other," Nemu answered as he stared into Kiel's eyes. "It could be a mark from the Redeemed, the Saved ones," he added.

Kiel raised his head, his eyes glowed brighter as his demonic energy began to overwhelm the room. Nemu and Deja had to create a demonic barrier to contain Kiel's demonic energy from coming out of the room. Kiel realized that he was consumed by anger and immediately suppressed his demonic energy.

"The Redeemed ones, that means they're already here under the Archangels' commands?" Kiel asked as he clenched his fists.

"We believe so, and their Master might be Archangel Michael, but we aren't sure yet and we are still looking for any information about that. If we make the wrong move, they will slip through our hands and won't be easy to find," Deja nodded. "We can't risk of pushing them further, and I'm so close to gain their trust," he added.

"I see," Kiel nodded with understanding. "Well then, I'll take my leave now and gather as much as I could in a month. Be safe, both of you," he said and then left the room.

Chapter 424 - 424: Meet again.

"The North has fallen! The North has fallen by the demons from beyond the Blackcliffs!" A man screamed as he ran around the village.

Rasmus stayed in the inn with Rullein, he was standing near the window when he heard the man's words. He opened the window and watched as the man informed all the villagers, warning them about the impending danger that was approaching. He decided to check what was going on and how did the man find that information.

When Rasmus walked out of the inn, everyone immediately lowered their heads and avoided making eye contact with him. They knew his reputation and they felt disturbed by his presence in the village, however, they couldn't do anything. He walked to where the young man was, and heard the people's murmurs about the phenomenon they witnessed a few days ago about the red sky.

"Who told you that?" Rasmus asked as he looked at the young man, panting after running and screaming around the village.

The young man was about to speak, but when he turned around to see it was Rasmus who had asked, he sealed his mouth shut. The old woman elbowed the young man, signaling him to speak because she was scared that Rasmus would do something to the village if he didn't answer.

"The merchant from the old town said that, and he said that he got that information from the merchant that had just left the North, Count Blackheart," the young man answered with his head lowered, stealing glances at Rasmus' face and silver hair. "The red sky that happened three days ago, he said that it came from the North, and he said that everyone was being evacuated, everyone..." he added and glanced at Rasmus' bright blue eyes.

"Being evacuated? You mean that the people in the North are currently leaving the continent?" Rasmus asked with his brows raised.

"Yes, Count! If you don't believe me, you should go to the Estanas Kingdom in the far north of Central Neva. The merchant was there, along with thousands of northern people that are currently taking refuge there," the young man answered and nodded repeatedly. "The merchant said that they came to Central Neva with Lady Eveline Sancticus because she's the one who represent the Northern people under the order of Saint Moriganne," he added.

Everyone knew that North Neva had decided to close off the border in almost a year not long after their expedition beyond the Blackcliffs. The whole world was wondering about what was happening in the North, and now that the Northern people were being sent away from their homeland, meaning the situation in the North was a lot worse than everyone might have thought.

"Where's this merchant now?" Rasmus asked.

"In the old town up north, a day from here, Count," the old woman answered as she pointed at the northern gate of the village.

Rasmus glanced at where the old woman was pointing, thinking about going there to meet with the merchant. However, suddenly he felt a powerful demonic energy coming from the west. Rullein appeared from a puff of black smoke behind him, and all the villagers fell on their backs with fear written all over their faces. It was the first time they saw her ability. They all screamed as they ran away from her, believing that Rasmus had made a deal with the demon and that they believed that Rullein was a demon.

"A whole demon army is approaching..." Rullein informed as she watched all the villagers run back to their houses and lock the doors. "It's similar to the one that you fought before," she pointed out.

Rasmus furrowed his brows as he turned around to look at Rullein with a confused look.

"The one that I fought before? In South Neva?" Rasmus asked with his brows arched.

Rullein nodded, affirming that it was the one that Rasmus fought in the past, during the war with demon forces led by Kiel and Yaza. Rasmus gave all the memories of his past to Rullein, the past of Rasmus, not Kyros. After knowing Rullein long enough, he knew that Rullein was a powerful asset because she could live in the past of someone's memories, pulling out all the missing pieces that the person failed to see.

"Which one is it?" Rasmus asked.

"It's Kiel," Rullein answered as she turned around and felt the demonic energy grow stronger and closer. "What do you want to do?" She asked.

"We will stay here," Rasmus answered as he looked up at the sky. "I want to know what they're trying to do here..." he muttered.

In less than half an hour, the sky turned dark, covered in dark clouds as thunder rumbled in the sky. All the villagers were trembling in fear inside their houses, praying to the Gods for protection. They didn't know what was happening outside, but they could feel the fear in them, a primal fear that their subconsciousness had warned them of.

The laughter, screams, and demonic growls could be heard in the distance. Rasmus stayed there in the middle of the village, waiting for the demons to come. When the demons arrived at the village, they saw Rasmus on his own, standing there and staring back at them. The high-ranking demons didn't hesitate to release demonic energy toward Rasmus.

Before demonic energy could hit Rasmus, a black smoke blocked all the demonic energy, absorbing them all while at the same time protecting him. The demons were surprised, but when they were about to release a powerful one, a man wearing a black robe and a white porcelain mask landed in front of them. The demons immediately lowered their heads and kneeled before him.

Rasmus could feel the energy that oozed from the figure, and he knew it was Kiel. A smile slowly formed on Rasmus face as he began to walk toward the figure that the demons respected and feared. Rullein appeared from the black smoke and walked beside him, staring at Kiel's glowing red eyes behind the porcelain mask.

"It has been a while, isn't it?" Rasmus asked as he walked toward Kiel.

"Yes, it has been a while," Kiel answered and glanced at Rullein, seeing the energy that she emitted, something more dangerous and superior than his own. It was no wonder that a Prime Lord was lost to her and got devoured by her. "I didn't expect to see you here, Count Blackheart. Out of all places, you chose to stay in this kind of place?" He asked, looking at the old village, nothing worth noticing.

"You think I'm the kind of person who enjoys luxury?" Rasmus asked back and stared at the demons behind Kiel and the possessed bodies. "I'm here just to enjoy the show. I was growing impatient that Nemu hasn't made a move at all, but now that I see you here, it seems that he has finally make a move," he answered as he crossed his arms.

"However, I'm wondering..." Rasmus paused as he stared into Kiel's eyes. "To see you again here instead of Nemu or the other one, it seems there's a change of plan?" He asked.

"Yes, a change of plan. It was you... or should I say her that killed one of us, making it impossible for Nemu and Deja to proceed with their other plan," Kiel answered and stared at Rullein, curious about her existence. "Would you mind moving away, Count Blackheart? I'm here to gather a force for myself for the future war that you have been wanting to happen," he asked in a soft voice, staring into Rasmus' eyes, noticing the drastic changes within him, a power that wasn't there before.

Kiel knew how strong Rasmus had become, and he knew that Rasmus might be on an equal footing with him or perhaps stronger than him. He could sense the same energy that Aris had within her. He realized that Rasmus might have awakened his Orthias bloodline from his mother's side.

"Skip this village for now. I'm staying here at the moment, and I don't want to move away. You could say that I'm fond of this village," Rasmus answered with a stoic expression.

Kiel stared into Rasmus' eyes and knew that Rasmus was lying about it.

"Have you forgotten that I can see lies, Count Blackheart? I know that you're lying about you being fond of this village. However, I know that you're telling the truth that you don't want to leave this place," Kiel said as he took a few steps back. "I wonder why did you have to lie when we both know that's useless," he muttered.

Rasmus didn't say a word and just stared at Kiel with a stoic expression.

"Very well then, we will leave this village alone, but it will be impossible for these people to survive here because soon enough, the whole kingdom will be mine, and they'll either die or become food for the demons as soon as you leave this place," Kiel warned.

"I know, and I believe that's none of my business, isn't it? I don't care about them, and you can do whatever you want to them," Rasmus nodded with understanding.

Kiel stared into Rasmus' eyes and once again, he found nothing but the truth from Rasmus' words when he spoke about how he didn't care much about human life.

"Very well, I'll leave this village be as long as you're here. I can promise you that, Count Blackheart," Kiel said and nodded with understanding as he took a few steps back. "Until we meet again," he muttered and then walked away as the demons and all his army followed him from behind.

Chapter 425 - 425: Let everything rest.

Rasmus and Rullein rode their horses, looking at the smoke in the distance from different directions. They had been on a journey for the past five days and they didn't find a single corpse or body. Kiel massacred all living beings in the Refenus Kingdom territory, leaving not a single soul behind.

"And here we are... the Blackheart's manor. Well, at least it used to be..." Rullein looked up at the big manor that was built on the ground where the Blackheart mansion was.

Rasmus looked at the landscape near the manor, and it felt nostalgic. He could hear the voices of the maids and servants that kept following him around back when he was still small. He closed his eyes and

shook his head, finding it unpleasant because those memories forced him to remember everything that he had forgotten.

"(Do what you want because I won't let you out ever again...)" Rasmus thought to himself, speaking to the old Rasmus while he spoke as Kyros, his former self from his previous life. "(Go on, satisfy yourself...)" He took a deep breath as the vivid images and memories of the past began to paint his mind.

Rullein was staring at Rasmus, watching him on his horse with his eyes closed. She looked at his furrowed brows, noticing the conflicted feeling within him. She slowly put a smirk on her face as she reached out her right hand to his face and pressed her index finger on his forehead.

Rullein entered the mind of Rasmus and she was transported into a very dark space. The only thing she could see was a young Rasmus, curling on the ground with his skinny body and long dirty gray hair. She didn't understand why she was brought to this place and why Rasmus was in his young appearance and not his current self.

"(What kind of thought is he having right now? Why is he on the ground, and why is he think of himself as his younger self?)" Rullein thought as she kept staring at Rasmus

Rullein knew that each person always had conversations with themselves in their thoughts, creating their own appearance in their thoughts to speak with. However, Rasmus's thought was different, she didn't expect him to create his appearance to be this weak and helpless in his mind. There were cases where someone would do this to themselves, it was either that they resented themselves or to feel superior to their own mind.

"(I never knew that you would see yourself like this...)" Rullein thought to herself.

She slowly walked toward young Rasmus, but then she noticed a presence behind her and immediately turned around to look at who it was. She couldn't see the face, but she could faintly see an old man in a red expensive suit, supporting his body with a cane, holding it with his wrinkly hands.

"Who are you..." Rullein asked with her brows furrowed.

The man didn't answer, his face was covered in blackness. Rullein narrowed her eyes when she didn't get an answer and decided to approach the man. However, she realized that no matter how fast and how long she walked toward him, the distance was still the same as before. She turned around and was surprised to see that the young Rasmus was still curling on the ground behind her. She realized that she had been walking in a place, going nowhere.

Usually, Rullein could use her power inside someone's mind and memories, but Rasmus was a different case. Rasmus possessed Dragon's Blood and she couldn't bypass him because in the hierarchy of origin, Rasmus was superior to her. Rasmus was born with an Aristoria blood, which on its own already possessed the genes of a True Dragon, and he also possessed Dragon's Blood while Rullein was merely an accumulation and manifestation of True Dragon's forbidden emotions and desires.

The man suddenly pointed his cane right at Rullein's face, the cane was right in between her eyes. She was startled, but then she watched as the man moved his cane, pointed it to his right. She realized that whoever that person was, he wanted her to leave. She had no choice but to oblige since she was powerless inside Rasmus' mind.

As soon as Rullein came back to reality, she noticed how Rasmus was staring at her with a stoic expression. She never felt fear, but toward one person, and that was Aristoria. However, at that moment, she could see the way Aristoria looked at her in Rasmus' eyes.

"The next time you do that without my permission or consent, I'll make sure you can't leave that place," Rasmus said with a serious expression.

Rullein hummed and nodded with understanding, however, she was curious about what she was doing back there. She knew she should feel scared, but her curiosity and knowing that Rasmus wouldn't punish her for her curiosity, gave her courage.

"What did I just see? Why did you depict yourself in such a pitiful state? Do you resent yourself? Your old self?" Rullein asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

"Why should I resent myself? That's just the truth of my former self, weak, powerless, desperate, in pain, suffering, and having no will to live. If I depict myself as a strong young man, aren't I being delusional?" Rasmus asked back with a stoic expression.

"I apologize..." Rullein muttered as she stared into Rasmus' eyes. "But, can I ask why are you doing this now?" She asked.

Rasmus glanced at the land that used to belong to the Blackheart family. There was only silence for a full minute, leaving the question hanging in the air. When he took a deep breath and exhaled deeply, he turned his gaze toward Rullein's eyes, ready to answer the question.

"It's not to let go of the past, but to let it rest," Rasmus said with a calm expression. "It has been years since I feel like I'm suffocating. It's time to put it to rest by letting it all out to where all the memories were created. One grows, blooms, and withers on the same ground, that's how it should be. My old self and this old memories of this place, I just let my old self go back here. I have to make peace before I move forward," he continued.

"Move forward?" Rullein tilted her head with her brows furrowed, finding that answer to be ambiguous. "Have you not been moving forward in the past few years?" She added.

"Yes, it's because I haven't made peace with my past self. Now, that I had made peace with him and let him rest, I can do anything solely for my own sake," Rasmus patted his horse's neck and looked at the manor in the distance. "No more holding back, no more bothered by the thoughts of my past self, and no more conflicted feelings," he added.

Rullein raised her brows, staring right into Rasmus' eyes and found a big difference in them. She nodded with understanding, realizing that at this moment, Rasmus had let go of his human side and became an Orthias completely. She then watched Rasmus pull out his father's journal from the spatial ring.

"What are you going to do with that now? You have finished reading the journal," Rullein asked, her eyes focused on the journal in Rasmus' hands.

"I usually burn everything once I'm done reading anything, a habit of mine," Rasmus said as he looked down at the journal. "However, I think this one I'm going to bury it..." he muttered as he looked at the distance.

"And where exactly are you going to bury that?" Rullein raised her brows.

"Where else? My father's grave," Rasmus glanced at Rullein with a gentle expression.

"I see, no wonder you wanted to go back here out of all places. But, do we even know where he's buried? I know for sure that Aristoria doesn't have a grave since she's an Orthias. Aristoria's body dissolved and disintegrated as soon as she died and Aris was born on the same day," Rullein asked and looked around, thinking of a way to find any information about Erglade's grave.

"I know where it is. I asked Great Sage Lenin about his grave, and she was the one who personally buried him. It's somewhere near here, somewhere hidden," Rasmus answered as he pointed to the north. "It's somewhere around there," he pointed out.

Rullein looked to the north and used her power to see as far as she needed to be. She furrowed her brows, finding nothing but a vast field no matter how far she looked. However, before she could say a word, Rasmus rode his horse toward that vast field, and so she followed him.

After an hour, they climbed a small hill with a single tree in the middle. Rasmus looked up at the tree branches, seeing the leaves blow as the sunlight was seeping through. He placed his hand on the tree's bark and noticed how young the tree was.

"He asked Great Sage Lenin personally, the night before the execution. He asked her to bury him here, and request her to plant the monkey pod tree here..." Rasmus muttered as he looked down at the roots. "He's here, becoming a nutrient for the tree..." He kneeled and began to dig the ground with his bare hands.

Rullein chose to not say a word and just watched Rasmus place the journal deep into the ground. It was the first time she could hear peace from Rasmus' words. She leaned her shoulder on the tree and watched Rasmus stare at the journal with a soft expression.

"Thank you, and goodbye..." Rasmus nodded and then buried the journal.

Chapter 426 - 426: Five Senses.

"My Lord! The demons are coming!" A man in full body armor, standing in front of Arandil with a worried expression. "They're two days away before they reach this castle!" He added.

Arandil was having a meeting with five famous warriors from various nations. They were used to be Arandil's direct disciples, personally trained by him. They were recruited by Arandil when they made a name for themselves back in the days, back when they were still young adventurers. The five figures that were sitting on the couch, in their simple and comfy attire, weren't Swordmasters, but they were rumored to be as strong as Arandil. Back then, those five figures were called the Five Senses.

"How many are they?" Arandil asked calmly, staring at the knight.

A man with long messy dark gray hair walked toward the knight and offered him a glass of water. The knight looked at the man's gray eyes, knowing who it was, and his name was Reynard the Peacemaker. The knight bowed his head to show his gratification as he accepted the drink and immediately emptied the glass.

"At least five thousand, My Lord!" The knight answered immediately, still panicking and his eyes wide open.

A man with short red hair whistled as he raised his brows and crossed his legs. His name was Crestefan the Flame Heart as he was a master who could turn Aura into fire.

"Never thought we all would fight side by side again," Crestefan said with a smirk as he looked at his friends around him.

"Just like the old days, huh?" Mazur scoffed as he leaned back, crossing his arms and closing his eyes. A man with a long beard and black ponytail. "Just don't get too close to me this time. I'm sick and tired of fighting next to you, Stefan," he chuckled and shook his head.

Mazur, a buffy man with a bald head and a scar on his left cheek. A man that was known as the Earth Splitter, a man with the biggest axe as his weapon that was said to be able to split a whole city in half.

"None of us want to be anywhere near the two of you. You two should stay away from us, and that's all what I'm asking for," Keith said and took a sip of his water as he looked through his dark brown hair that covered half of his face at Arandil who was still thinking about what to do.

Keith was known as the Marksman, the man who was rumored to be the one who assassinated the former Prime Minister of Sercil Republic. The Prime Minister was killed by an arrow in between his eyes from hundreds of meters away during a meeting inside the parliament building. He was accused, but it wasn't him since he was attending a ball, guarding the Princess and there were so many witnesses that saw him that day.

In a matter of days, Keith was capable of capturing the assassin while others failed for months to clear his name. His ability to see the past through trails and evidence proved his sharpness like an arrowhead, both in archery and other skills.

"Report this to Emperor Suncrown immediately. Tell him that we will hold the enemy force for as long as he wants," Arandil said calmly. "Either they will send us reinforcement or tell us to retreat, it's up to his Majesty. However, as the Lord of this castle, I'll fulfill my duty to protect it," he looked at the knight and nodded his head.

"Yes, my Lord, I'll go now and come back without taking a rest," the knight lowered his head and hurriedly left the room.

The room became quiet and they all looked at Arandil who walked back to his seat. A man with long blonde hair and bright blue eyes had been quiet the whole time and hadn't made any reaction to the situation they were about to face.

"All of you don't have to stay here. I'm not calling you all here to fight but to discuss the future plan," Arandil said as he looked at the five of them. "I believe there are people that want you to get out of this place since all of you have become important in someone else's life," he added.

"What are you talking about, boss? Aren't we trained for this moment? To protect the people," Crestefan raised his brows and stared into Arandil's eyes. "After all, we sworn in front of you that night," he added.

Mazur, Keith, and Reynard nodded in agreement with what Crestefan said. Arandil sighed as he looked at all of them and nodded with understanding, grateful for raising such individuals. However, he noticed that one of his disciples had been quiet the whole time.

"Something the matter, Arnold? You have been quiet this whole time. What are you thinking?" Arandil asked with his arms crossed and eyes narrowed.

Arnold the Kingmaker, the most famous and feared compared to all of the Five Senses combined. Arnold was the main figure that made the revolution possible and managed to take over the whole kingdom with his strategic thinking and his swordsmanship. He was the man who made it possible in the history of Central Neva.

"I'm thinking if this is the right thing to do, that's all," Arnold answered, crossing his legs and resting his cheek on his fist. "We aren't strong enough, and I know for sure we won't be able to even stop them from taking over this castle and we won't be able to save anyone. Rather than thinking of defending the castle, it would be wise to focus on warning the people from the neighboring nations," he added.

"Isn't that why we are going to fight the demons here? We are giving them time to leave," Mazur arched his brow as he stared at Arnold.

"If you think they're going to take this stone structure over the lives of the people, you must be joking, Mazur. We are defending the castle with no value to them. What if they split their forces and attacked neighboring villages, towns, cities, or even nations? We are basically defending something pointless," Arnold answered with a calm expression, staring back at Mazur. "Just think about it for a moment, Arandil. Are you sure we are going to defend this castle, knowing that the possibility of us wasting time here rather than protecting the people and the chance we are being ignored and endangering the people around us?" He pointed out as he glanced at Arandil with his brows raised.

"And what are you suggesting, Arnold? I don't think we have enough force to even stop the demons from marching if they decided to split their force into many," Reynard asked as he leaned against the table and crossed his arms.

"Bring them all here into the castle, as many as we can," Arnold answered simply. "Or, we can choose to bring them all somewhere where we can gather them all before the demon can reach them. We have a whole day to bring them all into one spot so we can protect them all while at the same time fight the demons," he suggested.

Keith nodded with understanding, and then looked at Arandil, waiting for his respond to that suggestion. The others also waited for Arandil to give his opinion about it. On the other hand, Arandil hummed, rubbing his chin with his index finger, thinking of the perfect place to gather all the people.

"Let's do that, and I think this castle is the best place to put shelter for thousands of people. It's big but it's easy to reach and I can deploy to different places," Arandil said as he looked at them with a serious expression. "What do you think, Arnold? Reynard?" He glanced at both of them.

"That's fine by me, and we have Keith who can move around freely, acting as our eyes. This castle is going to be our fortress," Reynard nodded with understanding.

"Yes, and a dungeon big enough to house thousands of people," Arnold nodded in agreement as he stood up. "Give us the order, Arandil," he said with a serious expression.

"Keith, you go north, Crestefan, you go south, and Reynard, you go west, gather everyone here before sunrise. If can't the rest of us will try to buy you time," Arandil said as he looked at them with a serious expression. "Every second matters, so don't

They all nodded with understanding, Keith, Crestefan, and Reynard immediately left the room to gather the knights to escort the people to the castle. Mazur and Arnold stayed there in the room with Arandil who seemed too calm for the situation that was about to come.

"You look calm, Boss. Is it because you have a new weapon to use? The weapon that you got from that day, it's capable of killing demons, right?" Mazur asked with his brows raised and then glanced at the greatsword hanging on the wall.

"Yes, it can, and soon I'll be able to tame it," Arandil looked over his shoulder and looked at Aristoria's sword.

Chapter 427 - 427: Confident.

Rasmus watched the demon army that Kiel led from afar. The numbers increased exponentially Thanks to the current situation in Central Neva where everyone chose to divide themselves. Soon, Kiel and his army would clash with one of the pillars of Central Neva, the Suncrown Empire.

"Everyone is safe?" Rasmus stared at Erdinand, who stood in front of him with Ayla beside him.

"Everyone is safe, My Lord. It's Thanks to you that the demons don't even dare touch us the moment we mention your name," Erdinand nodded and lowered his head.

Rasmus met with Kiel for the second time, earlier than they both had thought. During their encounter, Rasmus decided to speak about the Blackhands, requesting Kiel not to touch his people. Of course, Kiel accepted the request because he knew that he had no choice or that Rasmus would get rid of everything that he had built this far. With that being said, the Blackhands were untouchable by the demons the moment they mentioned their lord's name.

"The Mayne Castle is owned by Swordmaster Arandil, My Lord. We heard some information that he was going to defend the castle and gather all civilians there so he could protect them all at the same time," Ayla informed with a serious expression, her eyes stared into Rasmus' blue eyes, something that she didn't dare to even glance at back then.

"On his own?" Rasmus asked with his brows raised.

"No, My Lord. All his disciples are currently by his side in the castle, and they're going to fight alongside him," Erdinand answered as he shook his head.

"Arandil's disciples?" Rasmus furrowed his brows, not knowing anything about Arandil's disciples. "Who are they?" He asked.

Rasmus was so busy with his own plans and the mysteries that he found in his father's journal that he didn't do much research into Arandil's background. Erdinand and Ayla explained to him about the Five Senses and their amazing achievements and skills.

When Rasmus heard about Arnold and Reynard, it piqued his interest in them. Two strategist figures that seemed to play from behind the curtain and gained influence at such a young age. There was a reason why Arandil took them all as his disciples and it proved how right he was about those five people.

"They're going to defend the castle on their own? What makes them so confident with their ability to stop the demons from winning?" Rasmus asked and looked at both of them. "Both Reynard and Arnold should know that they had no advantage in this battle," he said as he tapped his fingers on the table.

"But they're Lord Arandil's disciples, My Lord. He's one of the few strongest people alive, and he's the strongest Swordsman. We heard rumors that his disciples were stronger than any Swordmasters, and they were on par with Lady Uriel the 2nd Swordmaster," Ayla answered. "If there are five people that are as strong as Lady Uriel, won't they be confident about this situation, My Lord?" She asked, wondering why Rasmus didn't believe that would be enough.

"I also believe that it's their duty to protect the people, My Lord. Lord Arandil is Emperor Suncrown's right-hand man, and he has been bestowed a responsibility to protect the people of Central Neva. For his disciples, I believe they're following their master and choose to fight alongside him," Erdinand added and nodded in agreement with Ayla's words. "Perhaps they have no choice but to fight?" He asked with his head slightly tilted to the side.

Rasmus already knew all that since those thoughts had come to mind the moment those two mentioned Arandil choosing to defend the castle.

"Something is missing, and I know that both of you are right about it. However, there's one thing that bothers me the most," Rasmus said as he furrowed his brows, staring at the spot on the wall. "Their confidence isn't from their ability. I know they're strong, but I believe they're not fool enough to believe that it's enough. The power scale of the enemy is unknown, and they know that, and that alone should break their confidence. There's one thing that make them so confidence even when they're facing the unknown, and that thing is what I want to know," he pointed out and stared at Erdinand and Ayla.

Rasmus had Videl, Serena, Aris, Rullein, and not to mention his own body that had transcended. Even with those powerful allies by his side, his own confidence was questionable to him. On the other hand, Arandil and merely his disciples had confidence that was similar to his, and he knew that Arandil wasn't the type who believed in luck or fate because people like that wouldn't be able to reach the top. He knew enough about Arandil that he could understand what kind of a person Arandil was, and he was confident that there was something, a variable that made Arandil confident in this situation.

"Do you want us to infiltrate their ranks and find out about it for you, My Lord?" Erdinand asked with his brows raised.

"Yes, but be careful. We don't know how keen they are and make sure you're not being spotted by the demons because if you did, things would go south because of you two," Rasmus warned as he looked at both of them.

"Yes, My Lord..." Erdinand and Ayla nodded and lowered their heads with understanding.

"Oh, My Lord... this is the report that you asked," Ayla pulled out a scroll and offered it to Rasmus.

Rasmus took the scroll and read the report from the Blackhands that went to the Estanas Kingdom where Eveline Sancticus and all the refugees were. The report stated that Eveline was planning to bring all the refugees to the Holy Nation where Aurelia was after she heard about the Holy Nation. The report came three days ago and that meant Eveline and the refugees might be on their way to the Holy Nation, and the Blackhands were going to follow them as Rasmus had ordered them to keep an eye on them.

The reason behind Eveline choosing the Holy Nation over other nations, including the Suncrown Empire was because it was her plan all along. Monica Sancticus, the future Saint of the North only trusted the people of the North to her only friend, Aurelia. It was stated by Eveline when there were envoys from various nations that willingly offered their nations to keep them safe.

The current situation in the North had worsened ever since the phenomenon of the Red Sky that happened a week ago. The number of demons skyrocketed and had rapidly invaded nations every single night that it was impossible for them to protect all of them.

"Knowing they're losing and yet some of them have stayed behind? Once again, something is amiss. They all should run away, abandoning the north, but they don't. They have no future there, zero, and yet the powerful figures stay behind," Rasmus said as he read the report.

"The only answer to that is because Orthias. Perhaps the North and Orthias have decided to become allies? That's the only answer to their confidence of not abandoning the North," Rasmus muttered to himself as he stared at the scroll in his hands. "Sanya might be the one that initiated the alliance since she has been with the humans ever since," he added.

"Yes, that's highly possible and that might be why they chose to stay in the North and fight the demons. Sanya is one of the oldest Orthias and she's someone that even the elders respect. At least that's what Aristoria said to me," Rullein pointed out.

"Is that so? But I don't think they can last there, it's just a hunch of mine. I know for sure that Satan and the Prime Lords there are getting stronger after that red sky. We both can tell something evil had just descended that day, and whatever it was, it seemed that they were ready to go all out," Rasmus said as he leaned back and looked at Rullein. "After all, I believe the one that made True Dragons extinct is them, or might be an Angel. Either way, they both are equally powerful," he added.

"Well, it seems like they're in danger then. If that's the case, there will be news soon from the North, bad news if I have to say," Rullein chuckled mischievously.

"Yes, I believe soon the North will be completely occupied and conquered by demons. The people of the North know that as well, but they still choose to fight. Perhaps they want to know the enemy's power first before they leave their homeland, and I admire that," Rasmus nodded in agreement.

Erdinand and Alya looked at each other, realizing that they weren't needed anymore.

"My Lord, I think we both will take our leave. We will gather information to infiltrate the castle," Erdinand said.

Rasmus looked at both of them and nodded. He watched Erdinand and Alya leave the inn and disappear into the night.

"So? What now?" Rullein asked.

"Now, we will watch Arandil and his disciples. I want to see what makes them so confident," Rasmus answered as he got up and fixed his suit. "Let's leave."

Rullein smirked and followed Rasmus out of the inn and went to the Mayne Castle.

Chapter 428 - 428: Stolen good.

Arandil wiped off the sweat on his forehead with a towel when he felt a presence behind him. He turned around and tossed away the towel as he stabbed Aristoria's greatsword on the ground, cutting the ground like a hot knife on butter. The person that came to his private training ground was Arnold with two short swords hanging on his waist.

"They came back with all the people. Right now, Reynard is guiding them to the dungeon. We have made it as comfortable as we could, and there would be enough food for everyone for a few days," Arnold said as he leaned against the wall and crossed his arms.

"We could have sent them to the capital city instead..." Arandil said as he walked toward the bench and sat there, staring at Aristoria's sword that looked magnificent with its shiny silver color with beautiful engraving on the blade.

"We could, but it's too far away for them. There won't be enough carriages, wagons, and horses for everyone," Arnold nodded in agreement. "Also, they don't have the money to go to the capital city either, and even if they have the money, they have no place to stay there. This castle is the safest and the closest, and we have no choice but to take them here," Arnold responded and nodded his head.

"If we failed to protect this castle?" Arandil asked, glancing at Arnold, testing Arnold's mind, the mind of a strategist.

"Then we are killing the people indirectly. If we couldn't protect them at this moment, who could? They're going to die anyway, but that's if we failed," Arnold answered calmly, his expression calm and collected.

"That's it? No other solution?" Arandil got up from the bench and walked toward Aristoria's greatsword, holding the handle with both hands.

"If you want a solution without losing even a single life, then there's none. If you're fine with sacrificing some, there are plenty of solutions," Arnold answered, looking out the window, seeing the sun going down. "Well, I know what you want. That's why I have used my connections to gather as many carriages and wagons as they could. Approximately, they will be here by tomorrow night or in the morning the day after tomorrow," he pointed out.

Arandil scoffed and put a smirk on his face as he shook his head. He slowly pulled out the sword that sounded heavy, and how the veins in his hands and arms popped when he lifted it up.

"I'm your disciple, I know you more than anyone, Arandil, all your disciples know you well. We know how you will prioritize the people at any time," Arnold smirked with his eyes closed. "Reynard also has the same thought, and he had used his connection to bring wagons and carriages," he added as he pushed himself away from the wall.

Arandil couldn't believe that his disciples knew what he wanted. He gave a nod to Arnold to show his gratitude, and Arnold nodded back at him. However, that peaceful moment disappeared the moment they heard the bells from outside. They both looked out the window and realized that the demon army had finally arrived.

"Gather everyone," Arandil said and hurriedly walked toward the door. "It's time for war, and we will defend this castle no matter what..." he muttered as he walked past Arnold and left the training ground.

Arnold nodded and went to gather his knights and to inform Reynard and the others to go to their positions that Arandil had assigned to them. He narrowed his eyes as he looked outside the windows when he walked at a fast pace in the long hallway. He saw dots in the far distance on top of the hill with dark clouds following them, and knew they were the demon army.

"They're still far away, but their presence is like they're already breathing on the back of my neck..." Arnold muttered as he clenched his fists and fastened his pace. "So this is what it feels like to be in the presence of a powerful being..." He took a deep breath and calmed himself down.

Edinand and Ayla had already infiltrated the castle, pretending to be refugees and blending in with thousands of them. They heard the bells and immediately some of the refugees were squirming in fear because they felt the presence of demons that brought their primal fear to the surface.

"It's our chances, let's go..." Erdinand whispered as he looked around and noticed the guards were overwhelmed by the chaos.

Ayla nodded and began to scream hysterically, making everyone around her panic as well. On the other hand, Erdinand began to stand up and pretended that he wanted to leave the dungeon because it was suffocating even though it was spacious. However, their acts were enough to make others act like them.

When chaos took over the people and the dungeon, Erdinand and Ayla used that opportunity to leave the dungeon. They had memorized the castle like the back of their hands and moved around without being noticed. When they looked outside the window, they both held their breath when they saw thousands of knights and mages on top of the walls, towers, and all the sieges.

When Ayla wanted to keep looking, Erdinand suddenly pulled her away from the window. Keith glanced at the windows in the distance, sensing a presence from inside the castle. He kept staring at the

windows with his eyes narrowed, but the more he looked at them, the less he felt any presence from there.

Keith shook his head, thinking that he might have been imagining things since he was on edge because of the demonic presence. He focused on the vast field in the distance where the demon army was standing still, inflicting fear on the soldiers. He then jumped down from the tower and landed behind Arandil.

"The demonic force is less than what was reported. It seems they split their force, thankfully we have anticipated that and took in all the civilians. This is a good thing, we outmaneuvered them," Keith said as he looked at the demonic army that hadn't moved a muscle every since they revealed themselves.

"Keith, stay behind with Arnold. I'm going to face those demons with Reynard, Crestefan, and Mazur," Arandil said and whistled to call his horse.

"I'll inform them..." Keith nodded with understanding and jumped really high to reach the castle tower.

In just a few minutes, Reynard, Crestefan, and Mazur came to Arandil's side, riding their horses and ready to follow him. Arandil looked at them and they all looked ready to face the unknown with him since they trusted their master. They rode toward the demon army while all the soldiers prayed for their lord's safety.

The demon army looked at the four figures that approached them, the Demon King looked at those figures. The Demon King raised his hand and immediately all the demons and the possessed unsheathed their swords. The moment the Demon King swung his hand down, all the demons charged toward Arandil and his disciples. Some of the demons cast dark magic toward them, creating weak hellfire that released corrosive gas.

Mazur laughed with a huge grin on his face as he stood up from his saddle and swung his axe around. He jumped high into the air and released a powerful Aura, slashing his heavy axe, cutting the wind and the sound, creating a powerful shockwave. The hellfire that was about to hit them suddenly changed its direction, destroying the area surrounding them, allowing Arandil and the others to keep on advancing.

"Is that all you got?!" Mazur laughed as he landed back on top of his horse.

The demons charged toward Arandil and the others, but then Crestefan moved ahead of the group with the spear in his hand. He jumped down from his horse and slowly the air around him became wobbly and the grass burned to ashes. His armor glowed hot red, and even the demons that were still far away from him could feel the extreme heat.

The moment Crestefan stabbed his spear to the ground, the ground trembled and exploded, destroying the bodies of the possessed and the demons that got hit by it. He used that opportunity to charge in and kill the remaining enemies that were trying to avoid the explosion. He moved so swiftly that his presence was hard to detect.

The Demon King watched at how Mazur and Crestefan fought and how easy it was for them to kill the demons and the possessed. Reynard and Arandil hadn't joined the fight, letting those two get their fair share, and that only made the Demon King furious at how the humans looked down on them.

The Demon King decided to join the fight, revealing its true form that was three times larger than the biggest human and its wings that spread so widely that they could devour a big house. The Demon King flew toward Arandil and pulled out its razor-sharp claws, ready to cut him to pieces, however, before it could see anything, the Demon King's body was split in half. All the demons were shocked when their commander got defeated so easily. However, their shock turned into fear when they realized their commander had actually died from that attack.

Rullein wrapped her arms around Rasmus neck from behind with a huge grin on her face.

"That sword... that belongs to Aristoria..." Rullein revealed.

"I know..." Rasmus's eyes turned cold when he found out that the sword that he had been looking for was actually in the hand of the man who had killed his parents. "Now I know why they're so confident, and I'm going to take that confident away," he said with a cold expression, planning to take the sword that rightfully belonged to him.

"Yes!" Rullein's grin widened from ear to ear as her eyes glowed bright orange. "Let's give them a proper show," she chuckled mischievously.

Chapter 429 - 429: Time is ticking.

Kiel lost his connection with one of the Demon Kings and was in disbelief that a human could kill one. He was on his way to a town, to take human souls and use their bodies as demons' vessels. He immediately ordered his army to go back and to assist the others that went to the Mayne Castle.

"Arandil, that man is actually strong enough to kill a Demon King. I'll take his life..." Kiel's eyes glowed bright red as the demons spread their wings and were ready to follow him.

The moment Kiel flew, all the demons followed him, unlike the other forces, Kiel only led the demons, not the possessed.

At the same time at the Mayne Castle, Arandil and his disciples fought the whole demon army. The soldiers watched as those four overpowered more than a thousand enemies. They knew that the demons were no match for Arandil and the others the moment the Demon King was killed by Arandil's hand.

The moment a few demons decided to fly away, slowly but surely the rest of them retreated, leaving the possessed behind. Mazur and Crestefan took the pleasure and killed all the possessed before they could run away. The victor of the battle had been decided before the battle even started, and when those two killed the last enemy, all the soldiers screamed and shouted, cheering them from the castle.

Arandil and his disciples rode their horses and left the battlefield, going back to the castle. They wanted to take the Demon King's body with them, but the body turned into ashes and disappeared the moment Arandil killed it. They had achieved a flawless victory, and they had boosted the soldiers' morale and the refugees'.

When they walked into the castle gate, they were welcomed by the soldiers. Arnold and Keith were waiting for them and applauded them for their amazing victory.

"That was nothing," Mazur scoffed as he rested his axe on his shoulder. "We were worried for nothing, am I right?" He glanced at Crestefan with a smirk on his face.

"Sure..." Crestefan responded as he rode his horse and checked his armor's condition after he turned it into glowing hot red armor. "You should know that this is just the beginning. We just killed one of their lackeys, and soon their master would come to avenge them," he crossed his arms and looked at the soldiers who were cheering for him, finding it pointless and foolish.

Mazur rolled his eyes as he jumped down from his horse and walked toward Arnold and Keith. Arandil was already talking with Arnold and Keith, and his expression seemed serious. They knew that Arandil never had celebrated anything because he knew it was pointless, and his disciples also thought the same thing as him.

"Soon, the rest of them will come, and they will know that you're a threat to them. They will do anything to get rid of you, and they will show no mercy," Arnold said as he looked at the castle wall. "You shouldn't have done that. You shouldn't let this battle end this quick, you should have played around with them, wasting their time and dragging time for our reinforcement," he added.

"I know, and I had considered doing that, but if I prolonged the battle, that also meant we would let the other demon forces to move freely even longer. We know how fast they move, and I can't risk letting them roam too far and take the people as their fuel," Arandil answered with a serious expression. "Every decision has its ups and downs, and I have chosen this," he looked at Arnold and nodded, acknowledging all the risks and consequences of his actions.

Arnold smiled and nodded with understanding, knowing exactly the mind behind the strongest man alive. Arandil knew that he was strong, capable of protecting others, and that it had become his responsibility to think of saving lives rather than sacrificing them for a mere advantage. On the other hand, Arnold wasn't like Arandil, he knew his limitations and chose to turn every death into something useful for the people, rather than letting them die without a purpose.

"My Lord! There's someone outside the castle wall! He's alone, and it's Count Rasmus Blackheart!" A knight shouted from the top of the tower, looking down at Arandil and his disciples.

All thoughts in everyone's mind disappeared, and the first thing that came to their minds was a man that destroyed a whole kingdom by himself. The next thought that came to their minds was the fact it was Arandil who did the public execution to Rasmus' parents. Even Arandil's disciples were anxious by the sudden appearance of the most feared and most wanted man in Central Neva.

"Should we get rid of him, boss?" Mazur asked with his arms crossed, his expression becoming cold and serious.

"He's a war hero, a dangerous man. You have zero chance of winning," Arandil said as he looked at the castle gate that had been shut tightly. "Open the gate, I'll meet him in person," his expression was stern and serious as he walked toward the gate.

The knights pulled the ropes and opened the gate slightly, big enough for Arandil to walk through it. However, to Arandil's surprise, all his disciples decided to follow him. He looked over his shoulder and knew that they wouldn't listen to him if he told them to stay.

"Just don't do or say anything, that's the only rule you have to follow," Arandil said, his expression cold toward his disciples.

They all nodded with understanding, knowing that expression on their master's face. They knew that this was something that they shouldn't interfere or get involved with, and if they disobeyed him, he wouldn't hesitate to knock them out cold.

Arandil's eyes focused on the figure wearing a red suit and a black shirt underneath with his silver hair and bright blue eyes that showed grace. However, the truth was nothing like the appearance, he was the most dangerous man that could get away with anything because of how powerful he was.

Rasmus stood there, his expression stoic and unreadable. His eyes moved from Arandil to all his disciples that walked beside him. He had seen enough and heard enough to know what kind of people they were.

Arandil stopped walking, leaving a huge gap between him and Rasmus, a fifty meter gap. His disciples stood still and stared at the man in front of them, the man that they had heard so many times in the past months.

"Count Blackheart, what are you doing here on your own?" Arandil asked with a serious expression, his gaze sharp like a warrior ready to fight at any moment.

"Let's skip the useless conversation since all of you are going to die if you don't prepare for what's about to come. So I'll make it quick," Rasmus answered as he stared back at Arandil with his stoic and unreadable expression. "Give me the sword, my mother's sword," he said calmly.

Rasmus knew that the source of confidence that Arandil and his disciples had was coming from Aristoria's sword which was capable of killing even high-ranking demons. He knew that the moment he took that sword away from Arandil, the fate of their lives and the castle they were trying to protect would be in Kiel's hand.

"I believe I can't do that, Count. This weapon is a spoil of war," Arandil shook his head.

"Of course I know that, and I'm here to take that sword away from you. However, I'm being generous right now, and I'm asking you nicely to give me the sword," Rasmus responded, his eyes never leaving Arandil's. "If you want to do it the other way, then so be it. I'll burn this castle down and everyone in it," he glanced at the castle behind Arandil.

Arandil's disciples clenched their fists, ready to punch Rasmus in the face for daring to say such a thing in front of them. However, Arandil stayed still, and knew that Rasmus had threatened him before, and knew that Rasmus could do that and he would be powerless to stop him.

"How about this," Rasmus paused, crossing his arms. "You won't be able to win against Kiel and his demon army, and I can guarantee you, that all of you will become vessels for demons. So, I'm proposing you a deal that will save your life and some of the people you're trying to protect," he proposed as he stared into Arandil's eyes.

"Some?" Arandil furrowed his brows.

"Yes, as you know, the reason why the demons haven't hunted me down and tried to kill me is because I made a deal with them. I spare their lives in exchange and letting them kill humankind in exchange for my freedom. I'm untouchable, and they won't dare to touch me or to get involved in my business," Rasmus answered as he nodded his head. "Now, if I chose to fight you here, the demons and even Kiel wouldn't dare to interfere. But the cost? I'll have to burn down this castle and kill some of your people," he suggested.

Arandil clenched his fists, the sound of his leather gloves and the cracking of his joints were heard by his disciples. They knew how angry Arandil was, and they also thought the same way except for Arnold who found this deal to be something worth considering.

"If I chose to refuse and kill you here right now, wouldn't that give me a bargain with the demons for taking your head?" Arandil asked back.

"Go ahead and try. Are you sure you want to waste your life and let the millions die because of your own stupidity?" Rasmus asked with a cold smile on his face, knowing that Arandil was no match for him.

Arandil clenched his jaw, realizing that Rasmus knew he was powerless and that empty threat didn't work on someone like Rasmus.

"So? What would it be? I'm waiting but the time is ticking," Rasmus raised his brows, staring at Arandil.

Chapter 430 - 430: A clash of two powerful figures.

There was only silence for a few seconds, and Rasmus could see the brewing Mana inside Arandil that slowly turned into Aura. He watched how the Aura was being distributed all over Arandil's body, knowing that Arandil planned to fight him at that moment. He pretended to not know while at the same time did the same thing in his body, distributing the Mana within his heart and turning it into Aura.

Arandil took a slow deep breath and immediately all his disciples glanced at him. They knew when their master began to take a slow deep breath, it meant he was about to get serious. They stole glances at each other, thinking the same thing which was to move away as soon as Arandil made a move.

In just a split of a second, Arandil dashed forward and stopped right in front of Rasmus. He swung his sword down vertically at Rasmus, but to his surprise, all he saw were sparks in front of him. He was stunned at how Rasmus disappeared right in front of his eyes.

Arandil glanced left and right but didn't find Rasmus anywhere until he saw a shadow above him. He didn't need to look up to swing his sword because he knew where Rasmus was. The moment he swung his sword upward, the blade clashed with Rasmus' heel, creating a massive shockwave and a huge crater underneath Arandil's feet.

"(What a powerful blow...)" Arandil gritted his teeth as he tightened his grip on his sword and looked up at Rasmus, who still had a stoic and cold expression on his face.

Rasmus put more power and Aura down to his feet, surprised by Arandil's strength that could withstand his axe kick. He glanced at Aristoria's sword since it was the second time he had seen that sword, the first time it was when he was still a child. He wondered how it felt in his hands and if it would react to his just like how Aristoria's armor reacted to Aris when she wore it.

The ground began to crumble and Arandil lost his footing, unable to withstand Rasmus' kick any longer. He used the split second chance to dash to the side before the ground sank. He watched Rasmus land on the sinking ground as the thick dust covered the whole area.

Before Arandil could even catch a breath, Rasmus came out of the thick dust and threw a high kick toward Arandil's head. Arandil immediately raised his sword, using the razor-sharp edge of the blade to block Rasmus' kick and hoped it would cut off Rasmus' leg. However, he was surprised when Rasmus pulled his leg and bent his knee slightly, faking his kick. When Rasmus' foot barely missed the blade and passed the blade, his foot stopped right in front of Arandil's face, he pushed his leg and hit Arandil in the face with his heel.

If Arandil didn't coat his face with Aura and concentrated the Aura around his face, his face would explode into pieces. However, even with such Aura, Rasmus managed to break his nose and sent him flying faster than the speed of sound. All of his disciples couldn't even see when he got thrown past them and hit the castle wall. To see their master, the strongest man alive to get thrown like that, it made them realize how monstrous Rasmus' strength was.

A massive crack and dent in the castle wall had proven how strong Rasmus was. The soldiers could only watch as their lord stuck inside the wall from a single attack. They wanted to help him, but they didn't know how.

"You bastard..." Crestefan grunted as he glared at Rasmus and used his flame heart ability. He grabbed his spear on his back and charged toward Rasmus without a second thought.

"You fool! Stop!" Arnold screamed as he watched Crestefan close the distance between him and Rasmus.

Rasmus glanced at Crestefan with his burning glowing red hot spear in his hand. He turned the excessive Aura back into Mana and released it into the air, manipulating every molecule around him with it. Every moving particle suddenly stopped moving and immediately the air became extremely cold and released a thick fog of cold mist like an explosion.

Crestefan was startled by what had just happened and didn't know what was going on until he saw the grass around Rasmus froze. He stopped charging but his momentum prevented him from stopping completely. He stabbed his spear to the ground, forcing himself to stop as he watched the fog spread toward him. Luckily, he managed to stop before his body entered the fog.

Crestefan's body was like a running engine, producing immense heat that could make anyone drenched in sweat in just a matter of seconds. However, when he stood there in front of the mist, his body felt so cold. When the mist reached his burning steel spear, it made a high-pitched sound and in an instant the flame got extinguished and the spear cracked before it broke into pieces. He was shocked and immediately dashed away from the cold mist.

"You fool! Did you forget that he's a Blackheart! He's a mage, not a warrior!" Arnold glared at Crestefan, furious by Crestefan's stupidity. "Just get back here!" He shouted.

Crestefan ran back and got rid of the flames around his body, feeling ashamed and embarrassed for being a fool. He could see the anger and disappointment in Arnold and Reynard's eyes. He had forgotten that Rasmus was a Blackheart, a family with a history that produced genius sages.

"Do you even realize that he could kill you easily? He's sparing your life, you fool," Arnold stared at Crestefan with his fists clenched, holding himself back from punching Crestefan's face. "We are no match for him. He's barely showing his power, and the fact that Arandil got humiliated like that..." He paused as he looked back at Arandil, standing there after he freed himself from the wall. "There's a reason why he's being called a war hero in South Neva," he muttered as he looked at Rasmus, walking out of the thick mist.

"Sorry..." Crestefan muttered, hating to admit how wrong he was.

Suddenly, Arandil dashed past his disciples at such full-speed that they couldn't even feel his presence or see him. He swung his sword rapidly, releasing slash waves at Rasmus, splitting the ground as far as the eyes could reach. He expected Rasmus to block his attacks, but he didn't expect Rasmus to block his slash waves like a breeze of wind. He felt like he was being looked down on when Rasmus didn't even bother to take the fight seriously, not to mention Rasmus was a mage, not a swordsman or a warrior.

Arandil's disciples watched every move and technique that their master did that always overwhelmed them when they sparred with him. Rasmus on the other hand, he dodged everything flawlessly with his

calm and collected expression as if he could see where the attacks were coming from. They couldn't believe their eyes, the difference in power and skill between their master, the strongest man alive and Rasmus Blackheart.

"Time is ticking. The demons should arrive soon," Rasmus dodged Arandil's attacks as he made eye contact with him, mocking and challenging him. "You're wasting your energy and your life here," he muttered as he grabbed Arandil's wrist, stopping him from swinging his sword.

Arandil released Aura from his body, manipulating it like his own limbs and blades, but to his surprise, Rasmus could do the same. The clash wasn't just from physical attacks but also from Aura that rarely happened. The Aura clash disintegrated everything around them, turning everything into fine dust. Even amidst the clash, Rasmus still communicated with Rullein who kept an eye on the surroundings for any sign of demons.

"They're coming..." A faint whisper reached Rasmus' ear.

Rasmus knew that he had to act fast, and so he took the fight seriously. He electrified and burned his muscles while at the same time letting the Aura run through his veins. Everything began to move very slowly including Arandil's movements that were at the speed of sound. He pushed Arandil away before he spun around and kicked Arandil away, throwing him to the castle wall, the same spot where he got stuck.

The castle wall crumbled by the impact, and Rasmus immediately flew up high into the sky. He created a massive magic formation with so many layers of Magic Circles above the castle, and all of Arandil's disciples immediately ran back to protect their master and the people. Rasmus watched them run into the castle gate as the layers of gasses appeared in between Magic Circles. He created a fireball on the first layer and slowly made it fall down to another layer and so forth until suddenly the fireball grew bigger and fiercer that the color of the fire turned almost invisible.

Arnold and Reynard looked at the massive magic formation above them, and they noticed something was off. They turned their attention to Rasmus, who was staring at them as if waiting for them to do something. They realized what Rasmus was trying to do, and so they commanded everyone to enter the castle.

As soon as Arandil and all the disciples walked into the castle with half of the knights, Rasmus released the fireball into the castle. The impact even melted the stones, but not powerful enough to destroy the castle. He watched as the knights who couldn't make it got burned alive and listened to their screams.

Not long after Rasmus released the magic, Kiel and all the demons came and watched Rasmus burn the whole castle and kill the knights from above. When Rasmus and Kiel's eyes met, Rasmus landed and Kiel followed him to where he was.

"This is the third time we've seen each other, Count Blackheart. Why do I feel like you're trying to get scheme behind my back here, preventing me from getting what I need," Kiel said, his eyes glowed red as he stared into Rasmus' blue eyes.

"You can read minds and tell lies, so tell me if I was scheming behind your back," Rasmus stared back into Kiel's glowing red eyes as Rullein appeared behind him to protect him.

Once again, Kiel found nothing but the truth and he could see that Rasmus did it for a reason.

"Then for what reason you're doing this..." Kiel glanced at the bright orange flame that was slowly devouring the castle.

"Because Arandil took something that belonged to me. He chose to not give it back, so I had to use force to take what's mine," Rasmus answered with a serious expression. "This is my business, Kiel. Go away," he said with a cold expression.

Kiel narrowed his eyes behind his porcelain mask, still thinking that something was amiss but he couldn't grasp it. He wanted to avenge his fallen army, but to have Rasmus there, he couldn't do it.

"Don't worry, I wouldn't kill them all. You can have your share, but for now, this moment is mine," Rasmus said, his eyes never leaving Kiel's. "Go away," he repeated.

Kiel exhaled deeply and looked at the castle and the melted bodies with the smell of burned meat filling the air. He signaled the demons to leave and waited for him. The demons flew away from the castle, far enough until they were dots in the sky.

"I hope we don't see each other again, Count Blackheart," Kiel said with a hint of warning in his words before he spread his wings and flew away.

Rasmus watched Kiel disappear into the sky before he snapped his fingers and extinguished the flame before it devoured the castle completely. He then glanced at the castle gate or at least the remaining of it before he walked through it and entered the castle to meet with Arandil, to take what was his.