

Evil 491

Chapter 491 - 491: Dehumanization.

Aurelia walked out of the palace's wall and was welcomed by the warm and peaceful atmosphere, wondering if it was because of the massive bonfire. Everyone was sitting on the ground, sharing drinks and food while sharing their life stories. When they realized that Aurelia was there among them, they all jolted and stood up in unison, looking at her with a relief written on their faces.

"Please, don't mind me. I want to join all of you, but if you treat me like this, I feel a bit uncomfortable," Aurelia, a soft smile painted her face.

The soldiers nodded and felt at ease when Aurelia wanted to be with them and just be herself like everyone else.

Aurelia looked around, searching for Alexander and the others, but the ones she found were Lenin and the mages from the Magic Tower on the far left side. Moriganne, Arthor, and all the leaders of nations were gathered in the center near the bonfire. She also couldn't find Serena or Rasmus, in fact, they seemed to be somewhere else.

After looking for almost a whole minute, she found Alexander and the others, having a drink and sharing the food with the survivors. She wanted to go and be with them, but she had something to do first. She was no longer a child, a woman, or even a saint, she was a leader that would change the future of Central Neva.

"You'll get used to it, Lady Angelis. It would be weird when people say a leader shouldn't be above their people, and yet their loneliness is exclusively theirs, not the people," Anastasha said as she walked beside Aurelia with the fan unfolded and covering the lower half of her face. "Some people are just blind with their ideals. And those who are obsessed with their ideals, that very thing will be the reason why they fail," she said, her gaze focused on the table where Julius and the others were.

When Aurelia sat among the leaders, they respected her as an equal. They were worried about Aurelia when Anastasha asked for an audience to meet her privately. There was no need for proof or evidence that an Asghar wouldn't use tricks and schemes to get what they want. They were afraid that the future of Central Neva would be in the hands of Anastasha.

"I would like to discuss the future of Central Neva, and I would like to tell you what Lady Asghar proposed to me," Aurelia said as she looked at everyone at the table.

All of them nodded with understanding and decided to listen to what Aurelia had to say. Aurelia then began to explain what Anastasha had proposed to her earlier. Everyone couldn't believe what they had just heard, and of course, they were suspicious of Anastasha and what she was scheming about.

"My Lady, you want to centralize Central Neva? Something like that has never existed in Neva..." Julius asked, his expression unreadable.

Aurelia suggested the new system called the Elective Supranational Hegemony. A system where it only needed one leader to rule over the whole continent. The leader stood above every national law, but the leader only ruled periodically, voted on which candidate that befit the seat. Councils had the power and responsibility to maintain the states, but nobody could become a leader.

The leader was called the High Regent, born and raised in a place without any influence of any nation or lived in a society which was Gratlan. The candidates would be raised and taught by someone who had no desire for worldly affairs, the Great Sage. The candidates were raised but not all of them were guaranteed to be candidates for High Regent if they didn't meet the requirement. Not only that, the former High Regent would be exiled back to Gratlan with no power and no influence anymore in the real world.

That idea was so dangerous but at the same time, it was something worth considering. The ruling system sounded perfect because it prevented corruption, dynasty, faction, and populism. The High Regent was nothing but a tool to achieve a better world for the people, making it undesirable.

"This matter can't be discussed within days or even weeks, My Lady," Lazarus said with a serious expression. "Even the North is united, it has no centralized system like that. It's not the system that we need to be worried about, but what kind of people that you're ruling over. This might solve our current situation, but in the future, decades after decades, this system is more threatening than it's meant to be," he pointed out.

"You're not wrong about that, Elder. However, the unity of your Northern continent is because all of you just survived from a tyranny that could take the whole North Neva. I can ask you the same question, when is it until the North Neva will create another tyranny because of a human desire? Another war? Another bloodbath?" Anastasia asked, smiling with her eyes, still with the fan covering her lower face.

"Tell me, what kind of civilization where nobody is thirsting for power and a desire for domination? We live in a world where desire and morale are always the source of conflict. So why don't we try where both are removed on a leader and create a utopia where a desire is no longer necessary," Anastasha asked as she stared at everyone at the table with a piercing gaze. "If you said that you're that person, Elder Lazarus, then it does sound possible, is it not?" She raised her brows.

The table seemed to fade into a different world while the peaceful and warming atmosphere around them felt alien.

"You're saying that the leader... or should I say the High Regent is just a tool for a better world? Something that can be used and thrown away once we were done using them?" Lenin asked as she walked toward the table with Novia beside her. "That's dehumanization, Lady Asghar. What you're trying to create is nothing but a monster that soon will collapse in this kind of world, or worse..." She paused as she took a seat and stared at Anastasha. "They will try to erase us because we are inefficient in their eyes," she pointed out.

"Isn't that what this world has been doing all along? Some of you worship Gods who aren't human. Some of us worship spirits or other higher beings that aren't human. Yet, people still worship them anyway. Why? Is it because of devotion? Loyalty? Or is it because those beings are the axis that keep this world from losing its meaning and from preventing this world from destroying itself?" Anastasha tilted her head slightly, staring into Lenin's eyes. "Why are you questioning it when the world is already using that form of obedience. The difference is that we just make that being real, to exist in the same world as ours," she pointed out.

"We live among beings that aren't humans," Aurelia said as she looked at her hands on the table. "Spirits, Orthias, demons, and other beings that we are unaware of. How many of us failed to unite because they were displeased with what they had? I have thought about this and have seen and heard about this. Yet, those beings are capable of unity, capable of living together without any conflict like us humans. Are we really better than them? Are we really superior? Or are we the only being that has flaws that have caused this whole problem into this world?" She asked as she lifted her head and looked at everyone at the table.

Everyone chose to hold back from their resistance and just thought of what Aurelia said. Of course, they all knew that, they all understood it really well that humans were flawed and had always caused conflicts and problems with each other. They knew that it was human nature, and nature couldn't be changed but had to be prevented or relocated into something else. Either way, they couldn't argue or try to justify the concern that Aurelia spouted.

"Can we please try to find a solution rather than argue? I want Central Neva to be a safe place, a safe haven for everyone. The North is gone and I want to create this continent into a place that allows all backgrounds to coexist. If religions can do it, why can't we? Religions cause conflict as well, which Gods to believe and why to believe the other religion is wrong. So I want this to work, to work beyond religion could achieve," Aurelia said as she looked at them with a frown.

"You are the one I chose, Lady Aurelia. The Magic Tower broke neutrality to support you, and we have looked at you as a leader that is worthy of leading the people. But let me ask you this, do you really want to do this? To create this system where you have to literally sacrifice your existence for the people?" Lenin asked with her arms crossed.

"Yes, I'm willing to do so," Aurelia answered with determination. "And please, help me make this possible. I know all of you really well, and I know that all of you want the same thing. Allow me to sacrifice myself while all of you assist me in achieving the utopia that I want to create," she said with a serious expression.

All of them nodded with understanding because it was all because of Aurelia that they could survive this. However, there was one thing that they didn't want to ignore, and that was Anastasha who had been defending this idea.

"And what do you gain from this, Lady Asghar? You're obviously gain something from this," Moriganne asked with her brows raised.

"Influence to push my siblings from succession, that's all. I don't have any other motives, and I have no desire to influence Aurelia or anyone in Central Neva. I can promise you that, and Rasmus can vouch for that if you want," Anastasha answered, smiling with her eyes.

Chapter 492 - 492: A quiet night.

Rasmus was leaning on the stone railing on top of the city wall. He couldn't stop thinking about what Satan said and her existence. His ears listened to everyone's conversation in the distance, but more importantly he was listening to Aurelia and the others.

While Rasmus was deep in thought, he felt a presence coming toward him. He didn't need to turn around because he could see through Mana. It was Erlina, holding a bottle of wine on her left hand and two wine glasses on her right hand.

"You have been acting weirdly, Count," Erlina leaned against the railing, standing beside Rasmus and looked at him with a serious expression. "Well, it's not just you though, Aris and Rullein also acted a bit differently. You're okay?" She asked and offered him a bottle of wine.

Rasmus took the bottle and a glass from Erlina's hands. He poured the wine glass half full and poured Erlina's glass similarly. He swirled his glass and smelled it before he took a sip while Erlina did the same.

"I'm fine, I just need some time alone," Rasmus answered as the sweet aftertaste lingered in his mouth.

Erlina hummed as she nodded with understanding, and then she looked at Rasmus, truly looking at his face. She wondered how he could maintain expressionless since it was more tiring than showing one.

"Do you still want to be alone?" Erlina asked, her voice was barely above a whisper.

"I am alone right now," Rasmus answered and took another sip of his wine. "Your presence is never unwelcome," he pointed out and took another sip.

Erlina smiled and stared at Rasmus gently, the warmth in her eyes mirrored the warmth in her heart. She took a big sip of her wine as she let the silence fill the air, giving a peaceful atmosphere.

"We are done here?" Erlina asked, already feeling tipsy since she had a drink before she came to check on Rasmus.

"I'm done here. It's Anastasha's turn this time since this is her battlefield now. You can stay here if you want, I believe she will help you get what you need from this continent, like the mining sites," Rasmus answered as he emptied his glass and poured his glass full this time.

Erlina hummed as she swirled the wine glass lazily, her gaze was distant and unfocused.

"What is it?" Rasmus asked as he turned to face Erlina.

"You're going to East Neva next, right?" Erlina asked, slowly lifting her head and stared into Rasmus' eyes. "I have bad memories of that continent, something that I don't want to relive again," she muttered.

"I heard from Matthias about your past, but I suppose what he knew was only a small part of what happened back then," Rasmus said as he took the wine glass from Erlina's hand since she could no longer handle alcohol.

What Rasmus heard from Matthias, Erlina was the daughter of a powerful lord. She was an illegitimate child where her mother was a courtesan. The wife of the lord hunted her and her mother, and based on what he understood, Erlina's mother was killed.

Erlina grabbed Rasmus' wrist, preventing him from taking her glass away. She snatched the glass and suddenly emptied the glass in a single gulp. She kept holding Rasmus' wrist tightly as if he was her lifeline. Rasmus looked at her and thought the worst thing that might have happened to her.

"I never told this to anyone, not a single soul..." Erlina muttered as she leaned her head against Rasmus' chest. "My mother was..." Her voice trembled and decided to pause to take a deep breath. "My mother was tossed around and I could only watch and then they killed her. They tried to do the same to me..." She clutched onto Rasmus' shirt, her whole body began to tremble.

Rasmus listened and stood still, allowing Erlina to use his body as her anchor. He could feel the fear and the terror in her voice and body language.

"They touched me, but I managed to escape before they could do anything else..." Erlina's eyes were glimmering in tears that threatened to fall.

"I can vividly remember that day and every time I close my eyes, the first thing that comes is that memory," Erlina said, seeking comfort from Rasmus' presence. "It's weird, isn't it? For someone like me to seek comfort from a man, especially after what I experienced in the past..." she rested her head on Rasmus' chest.

Rasmus didn't say a word, nor even showed any expression when Erlina looked at him in the eyes. He could see that Erlina had calmed down, and the weight had been lifted from her shoulders.

"Ugh, I feel so pathetic..." Erlina sniffled as she wiped off the tears in her eyes. "The next time I got tipsy, please don't let me snatch the drink," she chuckled as she pulled away and tried to regain her composure.

"Why would I ruin the fun?" Rasmus smiled as he refilled Erlina's wine glass. "I know you don't need a reason to tell me this story, but it seems you want something from telling this story," he said and watched Erlina stare at her reflection in the wine.

"I'm not sure what I want..." Erlina stood beside Rasmus and rested her head on his shoulder. "I thought I wanted revenge, but I felt it wouldn't be enough or perhaps meaningless," she closed her eyes, her voice was barely above a whisper.

"You just want someone to bear that nightmare with you," Rasmus said and took a sip of the wine. "You should have told Carrion instead of me. He's your future husband, not me," he watched the people below, still enjoying the night around the bonfire.

"I never have anyone to call a friend. You're my dearest friend, Rasmus. I don't want to be lonely in this kind of world that I'm living in, and I know you're not that far off from what I feel," Erlina muttered and took a sip of her wine.

"You chose the wrong person to call him a friend," Rasmus chuckled as he emptied his wine glass.

"That's not yours to decide, just deal with it," Erlina patted Rasmus' chest as she pulled away and looked at the empty wine bottle. "I..." She paused as she stared at the sky. "I know you're lonely as well, Rasmus. You just don't bother about it," she revealed as she looked at Rasmus.

Rasmus didn't respond to Erlina's accusation, not denying or admitting it. Suddenly a chill and strong wind hit their faces and someone landed in front of them, it was Marina.

"Did I disturb your moment?" Marina asked as she looked at Rasmus and Erlina. "I think I just witnessed something that I shouldn't have," she chuckled softly.

"No, Lady Marina. I just need a shoulder to lean on, but it's done now," Erlina answered with a smile on her face. "Just a woman thing, you should know that," she chuckled.

"Hmm, I don't have such luxury, but I do understand what you mean," Marina nodded with understanding, and then looked at Rasmus. "Count Blackheart, I believe this is the first time we ever have a proper conversation ever since we met," she smiled softly at Rasmus.

"Yes, and I assumed you have been wanting to have a conversation with me," Rasmus nodded.

"Although, I don't think I have the time for that now. I have to go back to help the situation that might have gotten worse," Marina looked at the sky as if she could hear something by the expression she made. "So I'm here to ask since my sister said that you promised to go to West Neva next. Are you going to keep that promise?" She asked with her brows raised.

"Yes, I'm planning on doing so once I'm done here," Rasmus nodded, remembering the promise.

"Oh, there's something else that I want to tell you, Count. It's more of a warning than an information," Marina said as she looked at the sky that had slowly revealed the hue of dawn. "West Neva might not welcome you. The world over there is completely different from Central and South Neva," she warned as she stared into Rasmus' eyes.

"The West and East Neva are similar but quite the opposite. East Neva is more of a kill or be killed while West Neva is more of survival of the fittest. They might sound similar, but they're different," Erlina said as she looked at Rasmus.

"Direct and indirect violence. I understand that much," Rasmus nodded with understanding. "I will keep it in mind, and I'll ask Alexander about the world in West Neva," he lowered his head slightly to show his respect.

"Please do, and until then, farewell," Marina lowered her head slightly before a whirlwind appeared around her body before she completely disappeared into thin air.

Rasmus slowly looked up and noticed it was dawn already.

"Time seems to be catching up on me, and time will wait for no one..." Rasmus muttered as he closed his eyes.

Chapter 493 - 493: A new system.

Days turned to weeks as Anastasha rebuilt the Holy Nation with the help of Magic Tower and Erlina's connections that provided the materials. The borders and the ports had removed the restriction on entering and leaving the continent. As soon as the restrictions got lifted, all marine ships were used to transport all the materials.

The city that was flattened had risen once again, and the Holy Nation would be the only nation in history that got destroyed and rebuilt three times in less than a year. What made it feel disturbing and surreal was the fact that the Holy Nation was the one and only nation that existed in the whole continent.

Aurelia's plan had been approved by all the leaders and they decided to support her wish. A new era with a new system where Aurelia had absolute power and authority over the lives that chose to live in Central Neva. She gave the northern area of the continent to Arthor and all the leaders from North Neva, giving them a new place to live.

The Ordinal Conclaves that acted similar to senators had been formed and chosen personally by Aurelia, and there were ten senators in total that would control ten different regions. Central Neva had dozens of nations with dozens of regions, but now the continent was narrowed into ten regions, making each Ordinal Conclave responsible for a big chunk of the continent. The Senators that Aurelia chose were Arthor Wyverncrest, Maximilian Wyverncrest, Morgianne Sancticus, Monica Sancticus, Isador Suncrown, Julius Suncrown, Volos Auvrey the former emperor of the Ruzia Emprie, Ligardis Evermount the former queen of the Crustaria Kingdom, Ulric Ironhart, and lastly Esper Frostspire.

They had decided to rename the continent from Central Neva to Centriva Continent and the leader was High Regent Aurelia Angelis. Everyone would address her as Her Mandate when her title wasn't needed to be addressed. Nobles and commoners didn't exist in Centriva, everyone maintained the land they owned before and had the same opportunity to become officials that worked under the Ordinal Conclaves.

A new law was made, a strict and structural law that shackled those who had power in the Centriva. The knight order was called the Ordinal Warden, and the one that led the Wardens was no other than Arandil as the Chief of Ordinal Warden and Castor as Vice Chief of Ordinal Warden. The survivor knights, warriors, paladins, and templars had become Ordinal Wardens.

Ordinal Conclaves and the Ordinal Wardens were equal in power but different in the power they were entrusted with by the High Regent. Neither were incapable of ordering or commanding each other, both only answered to the High Regent. To avoid future conflicts, they had the Great Sage who maintained neutrality and would be the deciding voice that the High Regent would listen to. The Great Sage didn't have power or any authority toward Centriva, but the Great Sage would be the decisive voice, but that didn't mean the Great Sage had power over the High Regent.

The news had been spread across Neva, making sure the world knew about the reformation of Central Neva. The other continent couldn't ignore Centriva's presence because those who worked under the High Regent were no others but war heroes or powerful families that had contributed to the world, not just the continent. There were people who had decided to move to Centriva out of safety from the demon invasion and the opportunity that it was given.

Rasmus and Anastasha didn't partake in the making of Centriva, completely showing that they had zero interest in the power it offered. Rasmus' and Anastasha's silence was unsettling because it could be interpreted in many different things. One thing that made them unsettled was that those two's silence might be because they chose to not reveal the flaw so they could abuse it in the future.

"What do you think of this, Count?" Alexander asked, wondering if his former teacher had any thoughts about the new system. "I'm talking about this new system, the Centriva continent," he pointed out, watching Rasmus write something in his personal journal.

"I have none," Rasmus shook his head as he kept focus on his writing. "Sometimes you just need to look and wait," he continued as he let the ink dry before he turned the page and continued writing.

"I see..." Alexander sounded a bit disappointed. "But why is it that I feel a bit uneasy about this. I know that they're all competent figures, and nobody could even stand equally on one of them. I just feel like..." He paused as he exhaled deeply and raised his brows. "I don't know... just feel like something is wrong or amiss?" He asked, his gaze distant as he stared at the spot on the ceiling.

"That's completely normal. Just because one bread is shaped differently from the rest, it doesn't mean it's not the same, you're just not used to seeing it in a different shape and form," Rasmus responded, his lazy gaze focused on the page and his writing.

"But this bread is using completely different ingredients, so I don't think that's the case here, Count," Alexander furrowed his brows, tilting his head as he looked at Rasmus.

"Even so, the purpose of the bread is to satiate hunger and to bring satisfaction to the one who eats it. Does it matter if the bread used a completely different ingredients when the purpose is still the same?" Rasmus asked, his voice calm like a man who had nothing but peace of mind.

Alexander pondered on Rasmus' words for a lot longer, trying to find the logic in Rasmus' words and what kind of argument to question Rasmus' words. Alexander might be the only one who could see more than just the tip of the iceberg of Rasmus' mind. He knew enough that Rasmus didn't care about the method but the efficiency and the result that met his standards.

"Even if it's spoiled or poisoned, people would eat it anyway since it still satiate the hunger. To satiate the hunger is one thing, but to satisfy the taste is another matter.." Alexander muttered as he sighed.

"Why would you think that bread was spoiled or poisoned? Did you assume the baker would poison their customers when their purpose was to give what the customers want?" Rasmus asked with his brows raised, and yet he kept his head down glued to the book.

"Well... you always assumed for the worst and to not trust anyone, so I assume you would think that way. At least that's what I learned from you," Alexander answered as he shrugged and shook his head.

"Just because I did it doesn't mean you have to. Rather than assuming about the bread's taste, you should have questioned the motive behind the baker for being a baker. You would have questioned the people in power, not the system. Don't question the bread, question the baker," Rasmus responded as he refilled his pen.

"Right..." Alexander sighed, realizing that his concern was the system, and yet his argument turned to the baker.

Alexander hummed, pursing his lips until something clicked in his head.

"But the bread can still be harmful or spoiled if the fault is in the ingredients. You can't blame the baker for it, right? Let's say that the baker wants to try a different and new recipe, but during the process, the

bread suddenly poisoned the customer. It's not his intention, and you can't fully blame the baker for it. The system can also cause harm to the people even though the intention of the people in power want nothing but the best for the people," Alexander said with his brows furrowed, staring at Rasmus with curiosity.

"If no one is poisoned yet, how can you be so sure that the bread is harmful. You can't say it's bad until it harms someone, and a system is like that. You shouldn't underestimate these people in power, you should overestimate them. They want what you also want, but again, just wait and see. You must walk, not stand still and ponder like this. You're not a baker, you're just an observer," Rasmus answered as he closed the book and put down his pen. "It's good to question things, but we are just observer here, nothing more unless you decide to partake in it," he stared into Alexander's eyes.

"You should be the one sitting on my side, Count, you always did. But why is it that you seem to have faith in them?" Alexander furrowed his brows even deeper, confused by where Rasmus stood.

"Because that's reality, Alexander. If you keep questioning things, reality doesn't care. What you do is be pessimistic not being aware of reality. Your mind right now is filled with nothing but uncertainty and fear, that's not seeing reality as a whole, just a possibility. You're correct that I should be the one sitting on your side, but you're incorrect to assume that I would ponder about a system, something that you will never be able to fully control," Rasmus explained, his gaze and voice as calm as ever.

Alexander realized that he was too indulged in possibilities without considering reality. He was a bookworm, someone who would indulge himself with knowledge, and he was praised for being knowledgeable even to more experienced figures. But he had forgotten that knowledge with detachment from reality meant nothing.

"Is this your way of living, Count?" Alexander asked, his voice a bit quieter than before. "You chose to see reality as it is and expect it to do harm. Rather than preventing it from happening, you let it be and just focus on achieving your goal in the most efficient way?" He added.

"Freedom is a weapon. Whether you use it to protect or to harm, both will end up hurting each other. I never control people's lives, Alexander. You do, all of you do. It's inevitable that someone will get hurt, and that's reality," Rasmus answered as he leaned back, making himself comfortable in his chair. "So is responsibility something that should exist without power? No, responsibility only exists for those who act. Whether it's the system's fault or the people's, the blame will always be on the one who partakes in it and holds control over the power," he added.

Chapter 494 - 494: West Neva's struggle.

Rasmus learned about West Neva from Alexander and it was as what Marina said. There were two powerful nations, the Vercnium empire and the Rosemore Kingdom, who had been trying to take over half of the continent. Both nations were at war for generations.

Back then, the Council of Neva tried to get involved but both didn't need their involvement. The people, the knights, and the leaders wanted war, so there was nothing the Council of Neva could do. The only reason as to why they wanted war was because of their belief. Both nations used doctrine to make their people hate each other, and their future would be doomed.

Because of the war, almost all the nations in West Neva got a lot of profit from giving those two nations resources to keep on fighting. The other nations would just wait and would use the opportunity when both had exhausted their forces. However, there were four powerful nations that could stop those two nations from doing whatever they wanted other than waging wars with each other. The three nations were the Vaiston Empire, the Asterion Empire, the Brithia Kingdom, and lastly the Zorzi Kingdom.

"We suspected that the demons were supporting those two nations, Count. Until now, we haven't found them in West Neva when the masked beings existed in every continent. We assume that the Vercnium Empire and the Rosemore Kingdom are the ones that are hiding them," Alexander said with a worried expression. "So far, what we have been dealing with is nothing more than demonic beasts. Even that alone is already troublesome because they're getting stronger rapidly," he pointed out.

"And there's no solution to that? The West has two powerful sorceresses, and that's not enough?" Rasmus asked with her brows furrowed.

"No, because recently we discovered that the Efiva mountain is not actually a mountain, but a massive dungeon at the top where all the Demonic Beasts are coming out from," Alexander answered. "The report came from Master Doloran, a Beastmaster. What he said that there was something that he called as The Mother," he revealed.

"The Mother?" Rasmus furrowed his brows.

"Yes, something that nurture or even gives birth to those demonic beasts because no matter how many times we hunted down the demonic beasts, their numbers kept increasing," Alexander answered as he nodded and looked at his fingers on the table. "It's not speculation, Count. It's the truth and Master Doloran managed to gather that information because he was the only one who managed to go all the way to the peak and sent a rat into the mountain," he explained.

Rasmus hummed as he narrowed his eyes slightly, thinking if this time the fight against the demons would be a straightforward one rather through schemes and manipulations. He hadn't spoken to Videl ever since the war was over, and he hadn't asked about the situation in the West since Videl had his minions that acted as his eyes.

"This information is confidential, Count. The people don't know about it yet, only leaders of every nation that know about this," Alexander pointed out as he stared at Rasmus, trying to read his expression and thought. "Well, since I have been here for quite a while now, I don't know what's happening over there right now. But, Lady Marina did mention that there's a team that will try to check the dungeon, a big group of Swordmasters, Beastmasters, and Sorcerers," he added.

"So that's why Lady Marina was in a hurry," Rasmus hummed and nodded with understanding. "The Mother that you mentioned earlier, did Master Doloran say anything about what it was or what it looked like?" He asked.

"A blob..." Alexander answered, uncertain whether Rasmus would take his answer seriously or not because for him, that sounded ridiculous.

"A blob?" Rasmus raised his brows.

"Yes, like a lump of fat or slimy... formless... body..." Alexander answered as he nodded, not sure how to explain it because even Doloran struggled to understand the rat that he was communicating with. "The rat said to Master Doloran that The Mother is a living creature, but it looked like a womb..." He added, unsure if Rasmus would understand or believe him.

Rasmus furrowed his brows, thinking if there was something similar to the teaching in religions back on Earth. He didn't recall anything that Alexander described, but so far, everything that he had

encountered, they were all based on old religions on Earth. He realized that he might want to discuss this matter with Videl, thinking that Videl might know something.

"Can you write a letter?" Rasmus asked as he stared Alexander in the eyes. "A letter that I want to join the expedition," he revealed.

Alexander was mildly surprised that Rasmus got interested with The Mother because he thought that Rasmus didn't even care about other things but humans. He then nodded with understanding, knowing that Rasmus was interested in the expedition, it would be the only guarantee that they would uncover whatever existed inside the mountain.

Rasmus glanced at the door and noticed there were people coming, and he could tell who they were.

"You should write the letter now. I have a guest coming," Rasmus said, his gaze stayed on the door.

"Yes, I'll write the letter now and send it to my father," Alexander stood up and lowered his head before he hurriedly left the room.

Alexander closed the door behind him and when he was about to walk in the hallway, he saw a man wearing marine commander attire. He stared at the man's face and the way he walked, he had seen a few of the marine commanders, and they all looked tough. He lowered his head when the commander walked past him and glanced at the man standing in front of the door toward Rasmus' chamber. He wondered who that man was, and so he went to meet with Monica and the others to see if they knew anything about Rasmus' guest.

Arka walked into the room, and both Rasmus and him were surprised to see the changes in them. Rasmus remembered that Arka wasn't as buffed as before, and not only that, he could see how much Mana that lingered around him. On the other hand, Arka remembered that Rasmus wasn't taller than him, but now Rasmus was taller and also a bit more muscular with his white hair that looked silver.

"Please have a seat, Commander," Rasmus said, pointing at the couch in front of him as he sat down.

"Seeing that you're here, it reminds me of what you asked of me when you brought me here to Central Neva," he crossed his legs and arms.

"I heard what happened here, and seeing that you all won the war is already hard to believe, not to mention there are a lot of survivors," Arka answered as he looked outside the window where the city was being rebuilt and becoming the symbol of Centriwa. "I don't know if you tried to save those people or not, but you were the one who kept those survivors alive," he turned to look at Rasmus with his stoic expression.

"So you're satisfied with that? And if so, you have to keep your words, Commander," Rasmus said, wondering what had happened to Arka since the last time he saw him. "You said that you'll follow me once I give you what you wanted," he raised his brows.

Arka never forgot that, and he couldn't forget it even if he wanted to. His conversation with Rasmus back then had been haunting his night. He never thought it would be this unnerving and disturbing to let himself work with someone that had a mixed reputation and the tendency to make others as necessary sacrifice.

"That's why I'm here in the first place, Count Blackheart. I'm here to keep my words," Arka nodded, his expression as cold as ever. "What do you want from me?" He asked.

"I want nothing from you, Commander. What makes you think I want something from you?" Rasmus tilted his head with his brows arched. "Have I ever said anything about wanting you to do something for me back then?" He added.

Arka narrowed his eyes slightly, and he didn't recall that Rasmus had ever said anything about asking for help or anything similar. However, he remembered that Rasmus said something that made him think that way.

"But you said back then that if I chose to follow you it would be beneficial for you and for me. If you want nothing, then how come it's beneficial for you?" Arka asked with his brows furrowed.

"The fact that you're not standing in my way, that's already beneficial for me," Rasmus answered, showing a tug on the corner of his lips. "And that's enough for me, at least for now," he pointed out.

Arka had prepared for this moment, tried to keep his mind clear for whatever Rasmus would say, but now that he was sitting in front of Rasmus, he realized that even his imagination of Rasmus was

insufficient. He should feel assured and relieved that Rasmus didn't want anything from him, and yet he felt the opposite.

"Now, how about we talk about what you want? If you want to become an Admiral, I can help you with that," Rasmus said with a serious expression.

"I want nothing either, Count Blackheart," Arka used Rasmus' answer to put him on the same footing as Rasmus.

"Nothing?" Rasmus asked with his brows raised. "So you just sold your soul and body to me, betraying everything you believed in just to follow me... and all that for nothing?" He smiled as he arched his brows.

Chapter 495 - 495: Teaching a lesson.

"A creature that looked like a womb? A blob?" Videl tilted his head after he listened to the information that Rasmus had gotten from Alexander. "There's something like that, yes. Even in hell the demons called it the womb of the mother. But its name that God gave it is The Formless," he nodded as he leaned against the wall with his arms crossed.

"It's a living being?" Rasmus raised his brows.

"Neither a living thing or an object. You can describe it as a living thing without consciousness, similar to plants..." Videl answered, trying to explain to Rasmus. "It doesn't produce beings or creatures, it's a provider, the one who produces disgusting food for the tormented souls and the demons. It's something vile because the fruits it produces, it only corrupts whoever eats it. If I can say it in short, it's one of the many sources of evil," he explained as he looked at Rasmus.

"The Formless?" Rasmus muttered, furrowing his brows, trying to recall if any religion had ever mentioned it.

"Well, in many human religions it has many names. The whore of Babylon, the formless and the void, the abyss, the pit, and other names. They're all different from how they interpret it, but they only

explain the crumbs. The truth is that thing, it's the source, the place, and the concept of something vile," Videl explained in more detail because Rasmus seemed to try to understand it.

"Nothing is born evil, something made into one," Rasmus muttered, thinking about why God created something like that. He knew that it had something to do with punishment and a challenge for whoever God chose to be tested. "That thing is dangerous?" He asked.

"In Hell? Not really, but here? It's as you know from Alexander that whatever it makes contact with, it will turn everything into something vile," Videl answered, his expression a bit unsettled.

Rasmus hummed, thinking that West Neva might be able to overcome this because the threat is real and predictable. He wasn't planning to create a mess like he did in Central Neva, but he wondered if there was a way to make humankind lose because he had done the same trick twice by working with the demons. He knew that plan wouldn't work for the third time, and he always overestimated people.

"Then? When are you going to tell me what the fuck is going on with you and the cult? You didn't tell me anything about them or who they worshiped. You were hiding it from me on purpose," Videl stared coldly at Rasmus, finding that Rasmus had been acting so suspiciously ever since he was no longer around him. "I wonder for what reason you're hiding it from me. You should know that if we lost the bet, I would drag you down with me," he warned, his eyes staring right into Rasmus' soul.

"Why does it matter? I don't think you care so much about it. After all, you never showed any interest in what I'm doing, and I never explained everything to you before. Why is it now that it matters?" Rasmus asked, staring back into Videl's eyes. "I don't know if I should feel threatened by your warning, not when I know someone that knows you better," he said with a stoic expression.

Videl smirked as his eyes began to glow red, walking toward Rasmus with his hands that slowly turned dark and his nails grew sharper and longer. He grabbed Rasmus by the collar while the other hand wrapped around Rasmus' neck. He could kill Rasmus at that moment, but he was bound by the bet, and losing wasn't an option for him.

"For the Devil like you, you seem to be overwhelmed by emotions. Is it because you're made by fire that you're nothing like Satan?" Rasmus asked, staring up at Videl, still with a straight expression without showing any fear.

"You forgot to whom you're speaking with!" Videl ripped his back as his demonic wings spread open and dragged Rasmus down into the floor where their shadows collided.

Aurelia, Moriganne, Serena, and Monica sensed an overwhelming demonic energy that they all suffocated for a few seconds. They didn't know where it was coming from because it felt like the whole palace was being wrapped in dense and suffocating demonic energy. The only one who knew of that energy was Serena, and she immediately ran to find Videl and Rasmus.

Serena couldn't find Rasmus or Videl, even Aris and Rullein couldn't detect Rasmus' or Videl's presence at all. They knew something might have happened between the two of them, and Serena was worried because she might know where those two were.

It was dark for a few seconds before everything turned blinding red as the heat burned Rasmus' clothes. He was completely naked when Videl threw him into the sea of lava where billions of tormented souls were being tortured. Videl didn't hesitate because he knew that Rasmus could survive that, but he was shocked when the sea of lava suddenly exploded and turned into cold magma in almost an instant.

"So even hell can't touch you anymore?" Videl scoffed as he stared at Rasmus, coated in ice armor.

"Either that, or your God doesn't allow me to die by your hand yet," Rasmus answered as he released a cold mist that froze the tormented soul and cooled down the whole sea of lava. "What's the matter, Videl? Aren't you being unreasonable right now?" He asked as he looked up at Videl, who slowly grew his horns out of his forehead.

Videl laughed and the whole hell trembled, even the magma that had been cooled off suddenly melted and turned into lava again. The whole realm was under his command, and nothing would disobey him, not even a single strand of hair of the tormented.

"I am the ruler of hell. God bestowed me this realm for myself, and you think you have a chance to fight against me here?" Videl asked as his wings grew larger and wider until to the point that one of his wings could cover a whole mountain, flowing that caused terror in the whole realm. "Let me show you the glimpse of my power here..." He grinned as his teeth grew sharper and bigger, ripping off his cheeks.

A single flap of his left wing released an intense heat that made Rasmus' ice armor crack. Rasmus had fought a few Fallen Watchers that were at least half of Satan's power, and yet none of them could crack his armor. This time, a mere hot wave was enough to make his armor crack.

Videl laughed and all the volcanoes that were five times bigger and taller than Mount Everest began to erupt. All the eruption flew down toward where Rasmus was and drowned him in the sea of molten lava as the massive glowing red hot boulders flung high into the sky. The boulders fell down like asteroids to where Rasmus was drowned. Every impact created a world-ending destruction.

Videl laughed louder and more manically as he kept showering hell with the boulders, killing everything even all the demons that immediately got resurrected. He clenched his fists and flew down, punching the boulders that had become one into a massive boulder. The boulder shattered into small pebbles that flung in all directions, destroying everything that got hit by it, even the volcanoes were shredded by the small pebbles. His fists shredded the ground until his left hand grasped onto something before he ascended.

Rasmus was covered with burn marks, half of his skin had melted and he was barely conscious. Even in that state, Rasmus couldn't feel pain, not even a sting, but he lost all his strength and power. He was stunned that he couldn't do anything to make himself survive against Videl, at least in hell. The fact that Videl said that it was just a glimpse, he wondered how powerful both Satan and Videl actually were when they were in their prime.

Videl grasped Rasmus' whole face, allowing one of Rasmus' eyes to see through the gap between his fingers.

"You should know that hell is a billion times slower than any world. One second in Neva is 31 years down here, and I'll make sure you'll have a lot of fun with me down here in this one second up there in Neva," Videl said as he tightened his grip on Rasmus' whole head.

"Still being unreasonable..." Rasmus spoke, but half of his lips and tongue had melted, making it hard to understand.

"Unreasonable? I guess you can say that," Videl chuckled, his lower face having fully revealed what the Devil actually looked like. He slowly peeled off his upper left of his face and revealed his fleshless face with a hollow socket eye with a red glowing dot in the middle that had drawn anyone into the endless abyss of his face. "But, it's more like teaching a dog how to behave to remember who's the master," he whispered with a huge grin on his face.

Chapter 496 - 496: One of the three.

Serena entered Rasmus' room with Aris and Rullein, after they felt Rasmus' and Videl's presence again. They saw Rasmus lying on the floor with a blanket that covered his naked body. Rasmus was barely moving while Videl was sitting on the couch with a cold and stoic expression.

"You're out of your mind..." Serena glanced coldly at Videl as she hurriedly walked toward Rasmus. "You'll make things difficult for us..." She stared Videl in the eyes and showed hostility toward him.

Aris and Rullein stood there behind Serena, staring at Videl with the same hostility as Serena. Rullein didn't need to touch Rasmus anymore to look through his memories because her core lived inside him. She saw the endless unimaginable tortures that lasted for 31 years in hell. She couldn't believe that Rasmus could survive that, and she was relieved that she didn't get sucked into hell with him because her connection with him was severed temporarily the moment he was brought to hell.

Serena carefully lifted Rasmus' head, and to her surprise that he was still sane but extremely weak. He was on the brink of death, but since Rasmus came back to the world of the living, the Overlord's power began to rejuvenate his vitality.

Rasmus slowly sat up with Serena's help, and he couldn't remember anything but the way Videl tortured him. He looked like someone who had lost part of his memories, someone who had amnesia. He avoided Videl's presence, blocking Videl from his mind completely.

"Rasmus..." Serena cupped Rasmus' cheek and forced him to look at her. "Hey..." She brushed Rasmus' cheek, knowing how it felt to be tormented in hell.

"He's fine," Videl said coldly. "That man is no longer human. His mind is impossible to break because of that thing inside of him. I could make him suffer even longer if I wanted to," he scoffed as he stared down at Rasmus.

Aris pulled out Aristoria's sword and didn't hesitate to swing it at Videl. Videl casually caught the blade with his fingers, smiling at Aris as his eyes began to glow red.

"You don't want to experience what he experienced. You're nothing like him, and you shouldn't do this because it would only make things more difficult just like what Serena said," Videl smirked and watched Aris' eyes slowly glow into bright blue. "Also, he's not Rasmus Blackheart, remember? He's Kyros Revenor," he arched his brows as his smirk widened.

"Like that bothers me one bit..." Aris coated the blade with her energy and that was enough to shred Videl's palm.

"Aris..." Rasmus said weakly as he tried to stand up with Serena's help. "I'm fine, and this won't change anything," he said and finally stared into Videl's eyes as soon as he got his composure back, pushing aside all the torments because he was back in the world of the living.

Aris didn't pull her sword, but she stopped releasing her energy to the blade of her sword. She never liked Videl, not even once ever since she met him in person. After she found out that Rasmus and Videl were nothing but two people that tried to achieve the same goal with nothing in between, she knew that hostility toward Videl was necessary. She didn't care if Rasmus was someone else, but the one that she knew, the one she followed, and the one who allowed her to be herself was no other than him.

"I need him, Aris," Rasmus said as he looked at Aris's cold gaze toward Videl.

Aris pulled her sword, but purposely cut Videl's palm with the tip of her blade before she stored it in the spatial ring. She slowly turned around to look at Rasmus, and she could see the exhaustion and that something had changed inside him from the way he looked at her.

"Well then..." Videl slowly stood up and fixed his tuxedo. "My job here is done. You should be careful from now on, Rasmus. I can make you suffer whenever I want," he smirked as he walked away and left the room.

The four of them watched the door close before Rasmus exhaled deeply and rubbed his face weakly. He walked toward the wardrobe and put on a shirt and pants in front of them. He then stared at his reflection in the mirror, trying to remember what he remembered before he got dragged into hell and tortured for 31 years.

"You want me to cleanse your mind?" Rullein asked as she approached Rasmus. "I can make you forget, and refresh your memories. I'm inside you, and I can try to make you remember everything before you got dragged into hell," she pointed out as she stared Rasmus in the eyes from the reflection.

"No, there's no need for that. I begin to remember everything now," Rasmus shook his head as he walked to the bed and sat on the edge. "Was it just a second for all of you?" He asked as he rubbed his face, trying to overcome something that could be called a true horror.

"When Videl used his true power, the whole palace felt it and then we couldn't sense your presence or Videl's. It was a second later that we felt your presence and Videl's, and that was when we came here and saw you on the floor," Serena answered as she nodded and walked toward Rasmus. "I know how it feels, and it wasn't a pleasant experience. Especially when dealing with the devil," she added with her arms crossed, staring at the door.

"I know for sure what I experienced was nothing compared to what you had been through," Rasmus scoffed with a soft smile on his face. "Now I understand why Satan warned me about him. What kind of relationship do those two have? Do you know?" He asked as he looked up at Serena who was standing in front of him.

"You already know about Satan and his existence, and you know Videl's existence from what you have experienced," Serena sat beside Rasmus as Rullein and Aris gathered in front of her. "Satan is like that thing that's stuck in your head, and no matter how hard you want to forget or to get rid of it, it will always be there and bothers you whenever you think about it. That's basically Satan," she explained as she sighed and looked up at the ceiling.

"Well, to answer your question what kind of relationship those two have, Videl always feel inferior to Satan. Everyone feel they're inferior to Satan, even the angels are question why Satan feels so superior even though God said they are all equal," Serena answered as she played with her nails. "All the beings that are made from fire, they all have strong emotions compared to the other beings, and to envy her is unavoidable. Angels who are absent of emotions and obey every God's words, they also feel inferior to Satan because she can speak to God and question God, to have free will that they don't possess," she continued.

"Satan can come and go to every God's realm, without asking God's permission. She's connected to all the events from when the Fallen from wanting to prove they can create a better human, Lucifer and his brethren rebelled against God, and how Videl chose to not bow to Adam and Eve, she was there and she was the one who saved them all including Videl. She was the one who proposed to God to allow Videl

rule hell and torture the damned but at the same time to be imprisoned there for eternity," Serena revealed.

Rasmus listened to Serena's words, and somehow her voice and the way she talked made him feel a bit calm and at ease. However, when Serena mentioned Lucifer, his brows furrowed and he turned his head toward Serena.

"Lucifer? Is he one of the three Soverigns?" Rasmus asked.

"He was until God bestowed Archangel Michael and his brethren to obliterate him and his brethren. But, Satan saved them, keeping their essences close to her. She came down to hell and took them before the Archangels could annihilate them completely," Serena answered as she nodded. "So, there's a chance that Lucifer and his brethren are here in this world as well, but I'm not sure where they are," she pointed out.

Rasmus closed his eyes, realizing there was another threat that he might have to consider. He then thought for a moment before something clicked in his head and looked up at Aris.

"You said that to your friend, what was her name again? Illidan?" Rasmus raised his brows. "You said that she was possessed and Satan said that Illidan was no longer there, so we assumed someone else took her body and got rid of her soul. Do you think the possibility that Satan wants to use Orthias as the perfect vessel for Lucifer and his brethren?" He asked.

Aris narrowed her eyes, thinking whatever this conversation led to, something was lurking and hunting the Orthias.

"What kind of being Lucifer and his brethren are?" Aris asked as she looked at Rasmus and Serena.

"As I said earlier that God bestowed Archangel Michael to obliterate them. That being said, they were powerful enough to threaten God's kingdom," Serena answered with a serious expression.

Chapter 497 - 497: A new plan.

Satan sat on the throne, her expression was cold and her gaze was distant. She looked at all the Fallen Watchers that knelt down toward her. She had lost everything from the army she had to the power she possessed. All the Fallen Watchers were ashamed, drowning in guilt because she had sacrificed her power to make them as powerful as they used to be.

Not only did they fail to find out about the cult, they also failed to conquer Central Neva and that they lost the Nephilim. To make it worse, when Satan left to conquer Central Neva and half of the Fallen Watchers came to assist her, Orthias pushed them back and killed a big chunk of their force as well.

"Master..." Yaza spoke, lifting his head to look at the magnificent being that stood above all else. "If you tell us to give your power back, we are willing."

"Why would I need my power back?" Satan asked, her soft-spoken words echoing throughout the dim throne room. "That power is yours now, and giving it back would disappoint me," she muttered as she crossed her legs and rested her head on her left fist, staring down at Yaza.

"But, Master. You're not like us..." Kiel immediately spoke, to justify everyone's desire to give Satan's power back. "We lost everything and we failed to give you what you want. We are not worthy of your sacrifice..." He slowly lowered his head until it touched the cold stone floor.

Unlike the Fallen Watchers who had fallen from grace, they had gotten used to taking human souls as fuel for their existence. Satan on the other hand, she couldn't regain power by devouring living souls, she had to recover naturally that would take a very long time even for beings like them. There was another way and that was to let the Fallen Watchers sacrifice their powers to her, which they knew that she would decline.

"You're not worthy?" Satan asked with her brows raised. "Then make yourself worthy of my power. Prove that you're worthy rather than proving that I was wrong for trusting my power to all of you, which is what I hate the most," she said as she slowly unfolded her legs and stood up from the throne. "Or is the latter that you all want me to think?" She asked, crossing her arms as she stared down at the dozens of Fallen Watchers that bowed before her.

All of them raised their heads to look at Satan, and fear of abandonment was written all over their faces. They didn't know what would be their purpose if Satan chose to abandon them because she was their savior, she was the reason why they didn't care about God's punishment that awaited them once everything was over. Their loyalty toward Satan was superior to their fear to God, and that alone was enough to prove how precious Satan's presence and existence were to them.

"Stand..." Satan said as she looked at them with a lazy gaze.

All the Fallen Watchers stood up and their eyes never left Satan's face.

"Now, use the power that I gave you to take back what those Orthias took from us. It's time for us to just focus on the north where we are right now," Satan said as she walked down the steps. "All of you are strong enough to threaten them, and we have enough information about them as well thanks to Morningstar. Prepare to attack because I'm going to need a few vessels for the rebels," she smiled as she glanced at Illidan who had been quiet in the corner with Ermaine.

Illidan slowly lowered her head, showing her gratitude that Satan had decided to give vessels to her fallen brethren. It had been a while since Satan saved Lucifer and all the brethren after the rebellion Lucifer led against God. Lucifer was the first that Satan brought back into the world, reborn as the Child of Morningstar in the body of Illidan.

"Go now, and I'll be waiting for the good news," Satan said to the Fallen Watchers as she walked toward Illidan and Ermaine.

All the Fallen Watchers bowed before they all left the room, leaving Satan with Illidan and Ermaine. They had gathered enough information about Orthias and where their homeland was. With the power they possessed, they could bring the bodies of Orthias as what Satan wanted, and they wanted to prove to her that they were worthy of the power she gave to them.

"You have been living in that body for quite a while now. How is it? Seeing that you're not complaining and the body seems to be capable of containing your existence, that means you got a perfect body," Satan rested her hand on her waist as she tilted her head and looked at Illidan from top to bottom.

"The body is perfect for me, and the more I train this body, the more it shows its durability as if the body has no limit," Illidan answered as she looked at her hands, slowly squeezing them and loosening them. "My brethren would feel the same way if they entered the bodies of Orthias," she added.

"That's good to hear..." Satan muttered as she let her index fingernail cut open her chest. "They will be reborn..." She put her whole right hand into her chest and pulled out six marble-like orbs, lying on her palms. "Soon you all will be reunited," she showed the marbles to Illidan.

Illidan went down to one knee with her head lowered, showing her deepest joy and gratitude to Satan. Her left hand clenched on the handle of her sword, excited to be reunited with her brethren. She then watched Satan put the marbles into her chest and the wound close by itself.

"How was your training?" Satan asked Illidan as she walked toward Ermaine and stood behind her, placing her hands on Ermaine's shoulders. "You must have been so eager to fight those Orthias when they attacked us," she looked at Illidan while her arms and wings slowly wrapped Ermaine's body, making Ermaine look like a cocoon.

"My current power is similar to the Demon Kings, not even worth to mention," Illidan shook her head, feeling embarrassed mixed with shame.

"You're just like me. Our power comes not from how many souls we devour, and there's nothing you can do about it. However, there's another method if you're interested," Satan offered, resting her chin on top of Ermaine's head.

Illidan raised her brows and by the look of Satan's expression, she already knew what kind of method that Satan was about to propose. The only one who could make anything happen was no other than the creator Himself. Without Satan having to explain it further, Illidan's gaze became colder and filled with hatred.

"No, you got the wrong idea," Satan chuckled as she gently brushed Ermaine's hair and stared into Illidan's eyes. "There's another method, and that's something that we can gain from this world. We both are going to find that thing," she pointed out as she pulled away and walked back to the throne.

"What thing?" Illidan asked with her eyes narrowed.

"Something that exists in this world, and somewhat it's near from us. All we have to do is to look for it," Satan answered as she sat down and rested her arms on the armrests. "Although I lost the war against the humans, I gained a lot of information from there. Rasmus Blackheart, something is residing inside him, and whatever that source came from, I want to find it. I believe the memory of the body you take might know about this as well," she smiled as she looked at the blizzard outside the stained glass.

Illidan furrowed her brows and tried to remember Illidan's memories, and there was nothing that mentioned anything about whatever Satan was talking about. However, there was one memory of Illidan that spoke about the Dragon's Maw, a place that even Orthias didn't dare to get close to.

"The Dragon's Maw," Illidan said as she looked at Satan.

Satan arched her brows as she tilted her head and stared at Illidan with curiosity.

"The Dragon's Maw?" Satan asked, cupping her cheek with a smile on her face.

"Yes, it's a place that even Orthias is too afraid to explore. I'm not sure what kind of place that is, but the fact they're avoiding it, meaning there's something in that place that they don't want to touch," Illidan answered as she shook her head.

"And do you know where that is?" Satan raised her brows as she walked toward Illidan with a big smile on her face.

"No, I don't know where it is exactly since this body and its memories have never been to that place before. But, I know where it is, or at least the path to that place," Illidan answered as she shook her head and looked at the excitement that was written all over Satan's face.

"That's fine. The three of us can explore this continent, like an adventure," Satan grinned as she spread her wings and flapped them in excitement.

Chapter 498 - 498: The Frozen Sea.

Satan, Illidan, and Ermaine walked in the thick and heavy blizzard that could kill any human in a matter of minutes because of the extreme cold. They had been walking for days, and all they saw was nothing but the whiteness of the snow. The trees were buried underneath them because it was the year where the blizzard would bury the northern area. They couldn't see anything, but fortunately, Illidan knew the northern area where the Orthias usually roamed around even in a blizzard.

The three of them entered Orthias territory where they would encounter them at any moment. Satan was in her weakened state, Lucifer was still adapting in Illidan's body, and the only one who could protect them was Ermaine, but that wouldn't be enough to keep them safe.

"So many wyverns out here..." Satan muttered as she looked up at the distance where wyverns flew around the peaks of mountains. "Looks like we are close?" She asked as she turned to look at Illidan.

"Yes, those mountains are basically nests for wyverns. We have entered the Wyverns Towers, and beyond this place is where the Dragon's Maw is," Illidan nodded as she kept walking to guide Satan and Ermaine to the Dragon's Maw. "We need to be careful from here and out because there are a few Orthias scouting in this area. They're trained to be invisible, even the wyverns can't detect them. So, if they found out about us, we would be in danger," she warned as she looked around.

Satan hummed with understanding and it was about her being unable to kill those Orthias, but it was about showing her location while she was in her most vulnerable state. She wanted to be discreet about her movements while the Fallen Watchers were preparing for war against the Orthias. She didn't want to cause any trouble at a time like this.

The moment they entered the Wyverns Towers, they moved a lot more quietly and carefully. The mountains were like towers because they were standing side by side with a small valley that separated those mountains. They couldn't use the valley because they knew that the Orthias would find them the moment they stepped their feet in the valley.

They had to walk around the mountain while hiding their presence, and so far they hadn't encountered the scouts. It was an exciting experience for Satan because she had never hid from anyone because of who she was. She couldn't help but enjoy this adventure like humans always did because one mistake would be enough to put herself in danger.

Thanks to Illidan's memories, they managed to walk through the Wyverns Towers without getting spotted by the scouts or the wyverns. Satan knew what she wanted to do once she had regained her power, and that was to use those wyverns as her additional army. She could turn hundreds of wyverns to obliterate humans if needed.

"We are close, all we have to do is to cross this frozen sea," Illidan said as she pointed at the frozen sea in front of him that was covered in thick mist that blocked her vision.

"A frozen sea? Not a lake?" Satan asked. She tried to use her all-seeing eyes ability, but even so, she couldn't see through the mist as if something or someone had created that since it was unnatural. "Anything that we need to be aware of?" She looked around with her brows raised.

"Yes, it's a sea because the Dragon's Maw is actually an island. We are basically walking through the sea to reach that island," Illidan answered as she nodded. "I don't know about this place. There's no information related to this place at all. Even the Elders of Orthias didn't dare to walk this frozen sea because of something," Illidan shook her head as her eyes tried to see what kind of danger that lie on the frozen sea.

"Ermaine, can you protect both of us? Since you're the strongest here compared to both of us," Satan turned to look at Ermaine, wearing a black tattered dress underneath the tattered black robe and a hood that covered her face and messy black hair.

"Yes, Mother," Ermaine nodded and clasped her hands together, creating a powerful divine barrier around them. "I will do everything to protect you and Lady Illidan," she assured, her expression flat .

After Ermaine finished her preparations and created a powerful divine barrier, the three of them began to walk on the frozen sea. Based on what Illidan said, the sea seemed to be a dangerous place because even Orthias' elders didn't dare to cross it. The moment they walked far enough from the land, they began to feel the heaviness that fell to their shoulders as if something wanted them to go back.

"Let me try something..." Satan said as she walked out of the divine barrier.

The moment she was exposed to the mist, she felt suffocated, but she immediately released her power around her. The divine barrier that Ermaine created suddenly cracked the moment it made contact with that dark purple energy of Satan's. Ermaine and Illidan immediately moved away from Satan and chose to stay away from whatever she was trying to do.

The mist reacted to Satan's energy and immediately it became aggressive, turning the mist into a strong whirlwind around her. Satan's energy was being torn apart by the mist, slowly purifying her energy into pure Mana. Satan was laughing in disbelief that her power could be purified by the mist, and she was slowly being attacked by the mist.

After Satan played with the mist and realized that she was in danger, she went back into the divine barrier. She watched as the mist stopped being hostile toward her and became docile like before.

"Whatever or whoever that created this mist and could purify my energy like it was nothing, they're powerful beings," Satan said as she watched the mist floated aimlessly. "The fact that we have no idea how far the island is and this energy is already this thick, I'm not sure if we are capable of going to the island," she smirked, excited in what was in the Dragon's Maw.

Illidan didn't need to say a word because she also knew that she would be crushed by the mist if she was alone. Ermaine didn't know if she could protect them with her power, and she wasn't confident after Satan said that.

"Should we just head back?" Ermaine asked as she looked at Satan.

"No, we will go deeper. We will see how far we can go first," Satan said as she shook her head.

Since that was what Satan wanted, Ermaine began to move forward with Illidan and Satan followed from behind. However, when they walked for half an hour, they all stopped and slowly looked down at the frozen sea.

"Do you see that?" Satan asked with her brows raised, her eyes glowing red to see beyond the ice beneath her.

"Yes, I'm seeing it right now," Illidan's eyes glowed with dark purple color, seeing through the ice.

"Yes, Mother, I'm seeing it as well," Ermaine's eyes glowed red just like Satan's. "Is that a wyvern?" She asked.

"No, that's not a wyvern," Illidan shook her head slowly. "That thing is a True Dragon, a being that roamed this world long before any humans or Orthias," she answered.

The thing they saw beneath them was the open jaw of a skeletal dragon that could devour thousands of people from the size of its mouth. The dragon that was frozen right beneath them with its all-white eyes wide open as if the dragon was staring right into their souls.

"So this is a True Dragon..." Satan chuckled softly as she bent her knees and admired the creature. "If this thing is alive, do you think there's anyone that could stop it?" She asked as she glanced at Illidan.

"Based on what the Orthias believed in, a True Dragon can't be killed, only a chosen one could," Illidan shook her head as she glanced at how big the dragon was because the frozen dragon had its wings spread. Based on what she saw, the edge of its left wing all the way to the right wing, it covered almost half a mile away.

"A chosen one?" Satan raised her brows.

"Yes, a chosen one, the Aristoria. The only one that possesses a power that could match a True Dragon is no other than the Aristoria," Illidan nodded while wondering if the frozen True Dragon was an adult or if there were more True Dragons that were a lot bigger than this one.

"I see..." Satan muttered to herself as she slowly stood up. "The fact that we are seeing a frozen True Dragon here, does that mean we are close?" She asked with her brows raised.

"It seems like it, and I'm not sure if we are powerful enough to even go further," Illidan answered and saw a storm brewing in a far distance, and the mist had turned a bit gray as if it was the last warning for whoever tried to trespass on it.

"Let's head back then, we will come back with a lot of forces on our side," Satan said with a serious expression.

Chapter 499 - 499: Heterochromatic.

Rasmus received a letter from Alexander after Alexander sent a letter to Agnesia and Marina a week ago about Rasmus wanting to join the expedition. The letter revealed that they would wait for him because at that moment, they were still waiting for confirmation from the other groups that wanted to join the expedition as well. They didn't know exactly when, but they would begin the preparations next month.

After Rasmus read the letter, he went to check the headquarters of Centriva. It had been at least a month since they won against Satan, and everyone began to rebuild the continent with Anastasha's, Carrion's, and Erlina's help. With the support of the Magic Tower, building a nation could be done in just a matter of weeks.

"Finally you showed your nose," Anastasha said as she walked toward Rasmus, who was standing next to a big tree. "I heard that you were cursed from the war," she unfolded the fan and covered the lower half of her face.

What happened back then when Videl brought Rasmus to Hell, it was known to everyone. Serena decided to deceive everyone that Rasmus was cursed by Satan after the battle, and she was the one who released the curse from him. Everyone believed her because of who she was, and nobody was suspicious about it anymore.

"You don't want to get near me if you're that afraid," Rasmus said as she looked at the main building base structure that was bigger than the Holy Nation itself.

"Afraid? Why would I be afraid of curses. Curses exist in the East, and it has become a normal thing there," Anastasha chuckled softly as she stood beside Rasmus. "This is going to be the biggest nation in the world, a powerhouse that will be feared by everyone," she muttered quietly so nobody could hear her but Rasmus.

"Perhaps," Rasmus crossed his arms and watched the mages use magic to carry heavy loads. "But that's none of my business," he pointed out.

Anastasha glanced at Rasmus with her eyes narrowed before she took a step closer to him.

"I have been noticing something. You really haven't done anything ever since the war ended. You didn't partake in all of this either," Anastasha said, her gaze never leaving Rasmus' face. "I know because I have someone that keeps observing you. Are you really not interested in this? This is like your biggest moment to control the world from behind the curtain," she pointed her hand at the mega structure in front of her.

"Who said that I want to control the world? I never interested in that," Rasmus glanced at Anastasha with his brows raised.

"Nobody," Anastasha chuckled softly. "I was assuming that you wanted that. But knowing that you don't want to rule the world, I'm a bit skeptical," she stared into Rasmus' eyes as she folded the fan, revealing her smirk.

"You think I'm lying?" Rasmus raised his brows. "If I lied, I wouldn't tell such a blatant lie like that because nobody would believe it, especially people like you," he pointed out.

"That's true," Anastasha nodded in agreement. "So, you really have no intention of ruling the world in the slightest? Really?" She narrowed her eyes, still skeptical about it.

"No, not in the slightest," Rasmus shook his head as he stared into Anastasha's eyes.

Anastasha tilted her head, looking into Rasmus' eyes and tried to read his stoic expression or body gesture. Nothing showed that he was lying or not telling the truth.

"I believe you," Anastasha nodded with a serious expression. "Anyway, have you noticed something? Something around this place..." She muttered as she glanced around.

Rasmus hadn't paid any attention to his surroundings, not in details. When he began to scan the surroundings, he noticed a banner, the same banner that he first saw when he arrived in South Neva.

"The Urion banner," Rasmus furrowed his brows, didn't expect the Urion family, a wealthy merchant family that would compete with the Ashenvale family. He didn't expect the Urion family to participate in rebuilding Centriva. "They wouldn't be here unless you brought them here. This is your doing?" He looked at Anastasha.

"Yes, but this one is different from the other brother," Anastasha answered as she unfolded her fan and covered the lower half of her face. "Two brothers want to inherit the head family, one who has gained support from the North and now this one who has gained support from Central Neva, or should I say Centriva now. But, since the North is gone and a part of Centriva, both of them will be busy with each other while spending the money to support Centriva," she chuckled mischievously.

Rasmus hummed, finding it interesting when Anastasha was basically putting both of the brothers in the arena to fight each other while supporting Centriva for free. Anastasha just used those two for her own gain and Centriva, making it impossible for the Urion family sons from gaining any advantage because of the situation she placed onto them.

"Isn't the Urion family supporting your family? You know what you're doing is going to problems to your family," Rasmus asked with his brows raised.

"I know, and I'm doing this to find out which one of the brothers that's going to befit the title of the family head," Anastasha nodded as she crossed her arms. "And in the past few days, I already know who I want. One is righteous and the other one is what I believe you also might like," she winked at Rasmus before she moved aside. "Since you're here, why don't you meet him as well? I can assure you that he's not that boring," she suggested.

Rasmus was still recovering mentally from what he had experienced in Hell. He felt numb and his mind was still a bit hazy from all the torture.

"I'm not interested in meeting someone new right now," Rasmus said with a calm expression.

"I see, but you know..." Anastasha paused to stand in front of Rasmus and stared right into her eyes. "Sooner or later you might want to go to East Neva, and you might need this opportunity," she pointed out. "I'll assure you, you don't need to say a word and just sit still. You can enjoy the most expensive wine from the East while I do the talking," she offered with a smile on her face.

"You're so eager, that's odd," Rasmus furrowed his brows.

"Because I don't want him to be your target that needs to get rid off in the future," Anastasha offered her hand to Rasmus. "He will be able to help you, especially in East Neva where things aren't as simple as anything in this world," she added.

Rasmus sighed as he offered his hand to Anastasha instead, and she immediately placed her hand on his hand. She guided him into one of the campsites near the mega-structure where the banners represented from which family they were from. When Anastasha entered Urion's campsite, everyone

lowered their heads as they avoided her like she was a tyrant warlord. This was the first time Rasmus witnessed how much the Eastern was terrified of the Asghar family.

When they entered the tent, it became eerily quiet when people were wearing high-quality and expensive silk clothing. There was one man, sitting on the chair with his black slick-back hair. However, what interested Rasmus was the man's heterochromatic eyes, a bright yellow eye and a deep blue eye.

"Lady Anastasha..." The man stood up and lowered his head before he signaled everyone in the tent to leave. "What do I owe the pleasure of your visit? And please, have a seat," he said as he pointed at the silk couch.

"Can you give me the Heavenly Wine? I want Count Rasmus to taste it," Anastasha said as she sat down and crossed her legs. "Come sit with me, Count," she smiled softly at Rasmus.

The man glanced at Rasmus for a moment before he walked out to order his lackeys to bring the Heavenly Wine. The man came back and stood there, not daring to sit because in the East, only the one with higher status could tell someone to sit with them or not. When the man's lackey brought in the wine, the man poured it into Anastasha's glass and Rasmus' glass.

Rasmus grabbed his glass and took a sip of the wine. It was surprisingly smooth, sweet, and yet the alcohol was a lot stronger than any alcohol he'd ever had. The warm spread all over his body all the way to his fingertips and toes. It was delicious and he understood why it was called Heavenly Wine and why it was the most expensive wine the Eastern had.

"This man right here, his name is Usman Urion, the eldest son of Sulaiman Urion," Anastasha introduced the man to Rasmus. "Usman, this is Count Rasmus, and this is the man that I choose to stand equally with me. So, if you did something to him both directly or indirectly, you need to be careful because I wouldn't stay quiet," she smiled with her eyes as she covered the lower half of her face with a fan.

Usman nodded with understanding, and he immediately averted his gaze from Rasmus.

"Well, that's that," Anastasha said as she took a sip of her wine. "The reason I came here is to ask you about the situation in your family's business, and your younger brother's. And, if you're lucky with the words you said, Count Rasmus might be interested in you as well, and to have him around, that's better than dozens sultans, kings, and even the emperor," she revealed.

Usman was mildly shocked when Anastasha treated Rasmus highly than the Emperor himself, the one that ruled half of Eastern Neva.

"Do you understand, Usman?" Anastasha asked as she unfolded her fan, showing her serious expression.

"Yes, Lady Anastasha, I understand," Usman bowed his head.

Chapter 500 - 500: A similar goal.

Rasmus listened to Anastasha's conversation with Usman and he began to see why Anastasha chose Usman over the other brother. Usman's plan was to change the direction of his family's future, which was to avoid a confrontation with the Ashenvale family.

Usman was nothing like Carrion, Daryus, Arka, or Javi, he was similar to Anastasha. Usman was a man who would do anything to achieve his goal but he had a compass that prevented him from being blinded by greed. That compass was the survivability of his family, especially in the current situation where demons have tried to take over the world.

"Your goal is the same as your brother. I don't see the difference when both of you want the same thing, and for me, the goal is what matters," Anastasha said, her eyes cold when she stared at Usman.

"Yes, we both want the same thing, the survivability of our family. However, he only sought support from the North. His desire isn't just to save our family, he wants to bring a powerful force to the East. He wants dominance, Lady Anastasha," Usman answered with a serious expression.

"You're saying that but what makes you different from him? What makes you so sure that you won't do the same thing as your brother? To dominate the world through business," Anastasha asked, her gaze judging all of the body gestures that Usman did.

"Because I'm not into this kind of world, Lady Anastasha. I don't have any desire to take the seat as the family head, but knowing that my brother is planning to take that seat from me and made deals with questionable people. He's blinded by desire and power. I have to stop him and sabotage his plan by taking the family head position," Usman answered with a serious expression.

Anastasha didn't need to glance at Rasmus to know that he didn't believe every word that Usman said. She could see Rasmus' body gestures and how he kept staring at Usman that he wasn't convinced by what Usman said.

Rasmus found the similarity between Anastasha's desire to protect the family with Usman's desire, but he found it unconvincing.

"The East is a place where one will kill their own blood to achieve their goals. Why don't you get rid of your brother to achieve yours since it's the easiest path?" Rasmus asked, and finally decided to join in the conversation.

Usman was surprised that Rasmus would say his first sentence to be that brutal. He was caught off guard that he couldn't answer the question immediately and it took him a few seconds before he could think of an answer.

"If I had I to, I would," Usman answered with determination written on his face. "But I would rather have a different approach to this matter when there was a possibility for it," he added.

"What's stopping you from killing your own brother?" Rasmus asked as he crossed his legs. "You didn't say that you cared about your brother as an answer, so I'm assuming that you didn't really treasure your brother or even bothered if he died. So why?" He raised his brows.

Usman narrowed his eyes, a bit offended by what Rasmus said, especially when Rasmus accused him of not caring about his brother.

"Just because I didn't say it, doesn't mean I don't care about my brother. It's a given that I care about my brother because he's my brother. I'm not sure if you understand since you have nobody, Count Blackheart," Usman said, his gaze sharp and cold toward Rasmus. "If you don't understand, I suppose you should keep quiet because you don't understand the situation," he warned.

Anastasha couldn't help but chuckle after she heard Usman's words. On the other hand, Rasmus wasn't offended or even showing any reaction, he simply just drank his wine without averting his gaze.

"You should be careful when it's only one-sided. Your brother might not think the same," Rasmus said after he let Usman's words sink in.

Usman knew that possibility, but he never gave it a thought because he knew his brother well. It wasn't that he trusted his brother, but he knew that his brother wasn't that desperate to get rid of him because he had never tried to compete before, until now.

"I can see it that you believe your brother won't do it. But, now that you're blatantly trying to sabotage your brother's moves, don't you think you just make yourself a threat to your brother?" Rasmus asked as he put down the wine cup. "You said that your brother is blinded by greed and power, you believed that your brother would do anything for those and yet you believed that he wouldn't get rid of you?" He added.

"He doesn't know that. We both use the same pretext that we are here because Lady Anastasha reached out to us. My brother still think that I'm not interested in taking the family head's position, and I'll keep it that way while at the same time doing it behind his back, unnoticed," Usman answered with his reasoning. "I'm not naive, and I know what I'm doing. This isn't about getting rid of my brother, it's about prevention, that's a big difference," he pointed out.

"If you believe you can change someone especially with such desire without having to cripple them or even kill them, I think you are naive," Rasmus responded with a calm expression. "You believe you have the high ground, believing that you outplay your brother, but that's based on what you believe, not reality. You have no idea what your brother is thinking, you have no idea what kind of move he's making, you have no idea if he realized what you're doing here. How can you be so confident with so little of information?" He asked with his brows raised. "You said you're not naive, but none of us here are convinced that you're not. You underestimate your brother, not overestimate him, and that makes you naive."

Usman clenched his jaw so that it was visible to Anastasha and Rasmus, revealing his frustration and emotion. However, when Usman glanced at Anastasha, he saw nothing but a woman who looked disappointed in him.

That was what made Anastasha and Usman different from each other when they both had the same goal. Anastasha would cripple her brothers from succession and make herself the family head of Asghar. On the other hand, Usman didn't want that, and didn't believe it was necessary when the Urion family was currently in its prime to reach the high that could surpass the Ashenvale family.

"Your brother know this is the only opportunity the Urion family to surpass the Ashenvale family, to become the greatest family merchant in the world. He's not blinded by greed, he has a strong desire to pull his family to where it belongs. You on the other hand, you're being naive, unmotivated, and you would rather drag your brother down with you just because you find his ambition to be dangerous. That's what I heard, and I believe now Anastasha also sees it that way," Rasmus summarized what he had heard from Usman's words. "If you see someone else in your shoes, you would call him a fool, a useless person, someone who's better to disappear from this world," he pointed out.

Usman clenched his fists, where his black leather gloves made the squeaky sound from how tight his clench was. If Anastasha wasn't there, he would force Rasmus out of his tent and even ask his people to threaten Rasmus by cutting off his tongue, but he couldn't.

"There's no point of being angry, Usman," Anastasha said as she unfolded her fan, revealing the lower half of her face. "You should admit that you're just pretending to be a better person than your brother by saying that he's endangering the family. I don't find a single fault with your brother's methods and his desire for greatness. I don't see it as a threat at all, and so far I don't see it that his desire would harm my plan," she added, her expression cold.

"So, tell me. Why shouldn't I support your brother? After all, the Urion family has sworn their loyalty to the Asghar family, and as the future head of Asghar family, I would rather to have someone like your brother, not someone like you," Anastasha asked as she crossed her arms.

Usman was silent, unable to answer the question and afraid that whatever answer he gave would only act as the last nail in the coffin. He was confident with his belief that his brother would only endanger the family with his ambition, but after Rasmus said it from a different perspective, he lost all the confidence he had.

"Well..." Anastasha unfolded her fan and covered the lower half of her face. "I like you more than your brother. So, give me one thing that will make me stay and not go out there to your brother's tent," she smiled with her eyes.

"Because I know the secrets that my brother has, the secrets of his involvement with the demons," Usman answered reluctantly.

Rasmus and Anastasha raised their brows slightly.

"Now that's an interesting answer," Anastasha chuckled softly.