

## Shadow 691

Chapter 691: Amitabh And Elon

"Interesting, it seems she's able to take on a beast form, adapt, and also be effectively immortal."

"What a truly impressive specimen," whispered Aurelius Venn.

The battle between Damon and the Wendigo was one of the highlights of the war games, his strength, technique, and overwhelming combat style leaving a mark on every spectator.

Grand Mage Amitabh stroked his beard, his large, polished antlers gleaming against his head of white hair. Though not of the Wendigo's kind, he was a beastkin of the deer variety, a grand master of magic from Aeronia, the magic continent.

He observed the proceedings with keen interest, eyes narrowing slightly as he analyzed Damon's spell. Seated beside him was the old headmaster of the magic academy, a bald man with a scruffy beard, his posture slouched but his eyes sharp with scholarly curiosity.

"Interesting to think he actually modified the basic magic blast spell so thoroughly, weaponizing an otherwise simple spell."

He stroked his beard, watching Damon with a small smile.

The headmaster of the magic academy didn't seem too pleased to see such talent coming from Aether Academy.

"If I can even call magic blast a spell. It's just a blast of mana, nothing more."

Amitabh smiled, a flicker of amusement crossing his eyes.

"Its complexities increase with each level. First, it was simply creating and compressing the mana, then shooting it from his finger. But he evolved it further."

The old man from the Eldorian Magic Academy narrowed his eyes.

"It can easily be replicated. You simply need a large enough mana pool and... hmm, I suppose this magic arsenal spell has difficult requirements after all."

He stopped himself, realizing that saying more might make a learned scholar like himself lose face. It was more complicated than it appeared. While he knew how the spell worked, its finer details were what made it dangerous. Attempting to replicate it without understanding the flow of Damon's mana through his circuits could easily lead to disaster.

"You would also need an understanding of rune magic," Amitabh added.

"Tsk," the old man clicked his tongue. "I didn't know Aether had someone with this much talent for the craft. Rune magic takes centuries to learn, much less master. Before you can make any practical use of it, it could take even longer... except—"

Amitabh cut him off.

"If they learned its secrets in Lysithara... or happened to have learned from Paimon."

The possibility of Paimon, a demon lord, teaching them was slim. That much was obvious, especially since Damon and his party had already overcome Lysithara.

"Such knowledge should be spread across the world, don't you think, Grand Mage Amitabh?"

Amitabh smiled faintly, finding his words amusing.

"Why don't you start by sharing your magic scrolls and making them public knowledge?"

"Hohoho, you old deer, I was just making a statement. There's no need to be so aggressive."

Amitabh shook his head at the bald old man's nervous laughter.

"Besides," Amitabh continued, his eyes drifting toward the temple's pavilion with a distinct expression, "he doesn't strike me as the type of person we can pressure into selling his secrets."

It was only then that the old man realized Amitabh's attention had shifted.

"You don't mean..."

Amitabh chuckled softly and nodded.

"Yes, without a doubt, the temple will want to control the Armor of the Pale Crown. Just looking at it makes me want to steal it, so you can imagine how much they would want it."

The headmaster of the Eldorian Academy closed his eyes and exhaled.

"Tsk... too bad we can't do much about them, not with his awakening so close at hand. We can't even be sure we can trust each other."

"They want his armor more than ever. The armor of the ruler of Lysithara."

Amitabh nodded, intertwining his fingers.

"They would also want that Wendigo girl for their propaganda, in the name of the goddess, allegedly."

The old headmaster shook his head, smiling faintly.

"Is that blasphemy I hear from the mouth of the wise Amitabh? Someone is being reckless. I could report you, old friend."

Amitabh raised his gaze to the sky.

"I'm tired, Elon. Tired of all this fighting."

The headmaster of the Eldorian Academy, Elon, closed his eyes.

"It's the beginning of new era, Amitabh. And we are getting old."

Amitabh tried to smile, but it faltered.

"It'd be better to say we are at the end of an era."

These two were not the only ones who had seen Damon's spell.

Iris felt her blood boil as she witnessed the might of what had once been the magic bullet spell. Having learned and mastered the original version, she looked forward to learning the magic arsenal Damon had developed. She was certain he would teach it to her.

All around the arena, a single undeniable buzz spread like wildfire. Damon Grey was, without a doubt, the most powerful of the contestants, and with that belief came the calls for him to slay the evil Amon.

The crowd screamed and cheered, the sound echoing through the stadium.

However, Luna bit her lips anxiously, watching her brother. Though she despised demons, she did not want to see him die to one.

The battle with the Wendigos had put her on edge, her heart racing as she watched her brother cough blood. But he still wore that expression, the one that meant he wasn't going to give in.

Except this time, he looked more arrogant than ever.

By her side, the Grand Duke, who had insisted she sit beside him, laughed heartily. When Damon was winning, the old duke was nearly on his feet, ready to shout his cheers in excitement.

In fact, he almost did but Cassian stopped him time and time again.

When the battle finally ended, Damon somehow managed to bring the Wendigo under his control.

However, the broadcast suddenly froze, leaving everyone in confusion.

Then, after a few minutes, it resumed.

From the looks of it, Damon's trials were far from over. If anything, they were just beginning.

The way he stood now, completely depleted, his injuries flaring and his breath ragged, left everyone wondering would he even be in good enough shape to fight Amon?

Chapter 692: Who's Your Daddy

"What now, should we find a place to rest?" Waton asked, looking at Damon, who seemed barely able to keep himself standing.

Damon shrugged his shoulders, blood dripping steadily onto the ground.

"Wait a minute... there's something I want to get off my chest first."

He slowly walked toward Waton.

"There's something important I want to tell you."

Waton nodded as Damon came closer, placing a hand on his shoulder. Then, in an unexpected turn of events, he snatched the squirrel from Waton's shoulder.

"Got you," he whispered in an icy voice as the squirrel in his hand squealed and tried to escape.

Damon let out an evil laugh, bringing Scar closer.

"Muhahahahahheheh." Scar tried to wiggle free, but Damon's grip was iron tight.

"I knew if I tried to catch you, you would run. But I got you."

Scar squealed, begging for mercy.

Damon grabbed the furry tail, smiling evilly.

"Any last words, you damn rodent?"

Scar tried to plead her case, squeaking frantically for help from Wendy, the only one who could understand her. But Wendy suddenly remembered that Scar had betrayed her for Damon.

"Bad... bad traitor." She turned her back on the squirrel.

Damon's grip tightened as his expression darkened.

"You brought my enemy to my doorstep."

Scar raised a paw in protest.

"I was helping you! And second, it wasn't even your doorstep, you stole that tent!" she squealed.

Damon wasn't hearing any of it. He swung her around by the tail, spinning her in wide circles over his head as she squealed in dizziness, then threw her to the ground.

"Next time you get wise, I'll cook you."

The squirrel staggered upright, barely standing, and raised a paw in shaky approval.

"Now that we got that out of the way... let's get something to eat. I'm hungry."

Watson nodded, his stomach growling already.

"It's almost morning. It's been a really long night. I can't believe I made it... my luck has never been this bad, but this time I had truly rotten luck. I lost my entourage, I ended up teleporting in the midst of demons, I got held hostage by your old flame... it's like I got caught under an ominous star."

"Ahem, ahem."

Damon cleared his throat, knowing full well he was the reason Watson had such rotten luck.

"Don't worry, Wagon. From here on out, it'll be smooth sailing."

Watson raised an eyebrow, already beginning to trust Damon despite himself, his arrogance slowly fading.

"You don't sound very reliable, covered in blood like that."

Damon waved his hand dismissively.

"Relax, it's fine. Everything is under control. Wendy will protect us. She's a big girl."

The Wendigo, who had been silently watching the entire time, blinked, not understanding why she would protect these two.

Watson didn't seem convinced either. He took a step back, hiding behind Damon. She looked more likely to kill them than protect them.

Damon sneered, pushing him aside.

"Watch, fool. I have tamed the beast. Observe."

He walked up to Wendy, who was dressed in Abellona's clothes.

She glared at him as he approached. Damon straightened his back, putting on his most condescending expression even though he was barely standing.

"Sit," he commanded.

Wendy didn't even move. She only glanced at him with disdain.

"Ahem, ahem." Damon cleared his throat awkwardly.

"I mean... roll over... erm... paw."

She didn't react, her brow furrowing instead.

Damon turned to Watson, clearing his throat again.

"She doesn't speak our language very well. She can't understand me."

Wendy raised her fist and punched him straight in the gut, sending him flying into a shattered wall.

"Understand. Not care."

Damon staggered to his feet, coughing as he brushed off the dust.

"Ahh, I didn't want to have to do this, but you leave me no choice."

He glanced at the broadcast orbs floating nearby.

"I am a man of character."

He walked toward Wendy, closing his eyes dramatically.

"It seems... I was damaged by your punch. From the looks of it, I won't be able to have babies for a very long time."

Wendy's expression shifted from irritation to horror, her face paling as if she had just seen a ghost.

Before she could speak, Damon raised his hand.

"But... I... I can heal... if... ahh, it's fine. Leave it be. It's difficult. I guess I'll just have to go my whole life without having children."

Wendy's pupils shook, her body trembling. Damon sighed with a melancholic expression.

"It's fine, it's fine."

Waton stared at him, completely lost.

Wendy was already on the verge of tears.

"Ho... how fix?" she stammered.

Damon sighed again, keeping his tone deliberately heavy.

"Well... humans are weird. We have something crucial for reproduction. It's called an ego. Apparently, if it's bruised, we just can't do anything. But... it can be healed if a woman is submissive... almost like a slave... no, better, a pet."

He waved his hand casually.

"Of course, you can't do that. You're a big girl."

He turned away, waiting. And as expected, she broke.

"What... what I do? What want me do?"

Damon smiled.

'Like shooting fish in a barrel.'

He placed a finger on his chin as Waton and the entire world watched with stupefied expressions.

"Well, you can start by giving me... hand."

She gave him her hand.

He smirked wickedly. Damon loved abusing power.

"Hmmm... how about... sit."

She sat.

"Hmmm... roll over."

She glanced at the ground, then at the dress she wore. Without hesitation, she lay down and rolled.

It was quite a sight, a grown woman rolling in the dirt like a dog.

Damon couldn't hold back his smile.

Watson looked at him, unimpressed. Having seen many depraved nobles before, he muttered,

"You look like a man awakening to a new fetish."

Damon didn't care about his words.

"Now kneel."

She kneeled before him.

"Tongue out."

She quickly stuck her tongue out.

"Now say woof woof."

"Woof woof."

Damon didn't know what this feeling was, but he was loving it.

"Who's your daddy?" Damon asked, the power already corrupting his depraved soul.

"You're my daddy."

"Say it louder," he laughed, lost in the darkness.

"Daddy!"

Watson knew there was no bringing him back. He had already awakened to a fetish. Still, he had to try, the world was watching.

"Hey, isn't that dress expensive? Is it really alright to get dirt on it?"

Damon glanced at him, waving his hand dismissively.

"It's just Piyon. It's rare, and my sister has one." Watson continued.

There was a look of disdain on Damon's face.

"Huh, you think your sister is the only one with a black Piyon dress? Huh, huh?"

Watson blinked, looking away awkwardly.

"Actually... yes. That's an heirloom from the late Empress Dowager."

Damon glanced at the magic orbs broadcasting around them, realizing what that meant.

He was the one who had given Wendy the dress. The question on everyone's mind was how this wretch had gotten hold of the princess's dress.

"How did you come across it?"

"Cough, cough... I... well... erm... cough." Damon began coughing violently, using the fit as an excuse not to answer. Blood splattered from his lips, a perfect distraction from the question he didn't dare answer.

#### Chapter 693: She's Cheating

Damon never gave an answer to the question, or better yet, to the allegations against him. All Waton could say was that this guy only grew more mysterious the closer he got to him.

It felt like anything and everything could crawl out of that shadow of his.

He smiled faintly at Damon. This guy wasn't a good person. First impressions could be deceiving. He might look like an arrogant commoner, but there was something about him Waton could understand.

"If you were born a noble, I believe you and I would have been good friends."

Damon turned, narrowing his eyes.

"What... what did you say..."

Waton looked away immediately.

Damon sighed.

'No, I can't let him get to me. How could I heartlessly abandon him when the time is right?'

Damon was about to speak again when he suddenly froze, turning his head toward the distance. His expression darkened.

He pointed toward the horizon.

"Is it just me, or is the world shrinking?"

Watson followed his gaze, eyes widening slightly before he nodded.

"Yeah, I guess I forgot to mention it, but the combat zone is shrinking. That chaotic area can kill any person trapped there."

Damon nodded, watching the distortion with casual detachment.

"It's moving pretty fast too."

Watson smiled faintly.

"No need to worry about me. I have wings. I can fly away before it reaches me."

Damon nodded slowly, his tone dry.

"Come closer, Watson... come closer."

The moment Watson stepped forward, Damon grabbed his head and growled.

"Some of us don't have wings and are too injured, maybe you should have said that fifteen minutes ago."

Watson scratched his head awkwardly.

"Hehe, sorry about that, but don't worry... I can still carry you."

Damon looked at the approaching storm and imagined himself being carried by Watson like a princess.

'If I do that, I'll lose all my aura... me, carried like a princess?'

"I'd rather die," he muttered.

Wendy tilted her head at the two of them.

"Why are we still talking?" she asked, her words clearer than before, her grasp of their language slowly improving.

Damon nodded quickly.

"Transform back to a Wendigo."

She shook her head.

"No... too weak."

Damon gulped.

"What do you mean you're too weak to transform? That's your true form."

"Tired. Low mana. Not enough," she said simply.

Damon turned to look at the wave of chaotic energy sweeping toward them, streams of wild mana tearing through the air and disintegrating everything they touched.

"Hmmm..."

The three of them exchanged glances as the wave grew closer. It was so massive it was hard to gauge its speed, yet it was fast, far faster than it had any right to be.

No more words were spoken.

Watson spread his wings and took to the sky, flying as fast as he could. Wendy ran through the ruins behind, her claws scraping against shattered stone as she sprinted with feral grace. Damon melted into the ground, his form dissolving into shadow as he followed them.

All around them, the chaos of survival erupted. Demon beasts and monsters fled in every direction, their howls blending with the roar of the collapsing world.

Damon slipped into the shadow of a demon beast, his body aching, his strength fading. He gritted his teeth and ignored the pain, letting himself be dragged along until he could teleport from one shadow to another. Each leap drained him further until, finally, he reached Wendy's shadow and sank into it.

Wendy glanced at the darkness flickering beneath her feet, sensing his presence, but said nothing.

Damon peeked out from within her shadow just in time to see the city swallowed by a sea of purple light. The ruins, the towers, the remnants of a once-great city, everything was erased in an instant, leaving behind only a luminous wall of violet energy that shimmered menacingly before it began to slow.

Wendy skidded to a stop, panting. That had been too close. Watson descended nearby, wiping sweat from his forehead as he caught his breath.

They weren't the only ones who had survived. Demon beasts and monsters had also stopped, frozen, their gazes fixed on the glowing destruction behind them.

"Phew," Waton sighed in relief, until the realization hit him. They were standing right in the middle of what was left of the monsters in the city.

"Hey, Wendy... keep Wagon alive, okay." Damon asked.

Waton blinked in confusion.

"Keep me alive? From what? Why?"

Before he could say more, Damon gave them a lazy wave and melted into Waton's shadow.

The demon beasts didn't wait for an invitation. They charged.

Wendy met the first one head-on, her bone blade slicing through its neck in a single clean motion. Blood sprayed, and she spun to meet the next.

Waton froze for a moment, overwhelmed by the sudden attack, then scrambled to cast his time magic in support. But it quickly became clear Wendy didn't need his help. She fought like a whirlwind, each swing brutal and precise.

Oddly, most of the beasts ignored Waton altogether. Their aggression focused entirely on Wendy. Waton was strong in the third class, and far from weak but for some reason, not many came for him.

It was hard to notice in the chaos, but the truth was simple: from within Waton's shadow, Damon was quietly exerting his Demon Dominate, bending the demons' instincts away from his pawn.

When the last beast fell, silence returned. The air was thick with the smell of blood.

A small pile of medallions lay before them.

Watson, drenched in gore, crouched and picked them up.

"Look, we have medallions."

Damon didn't respond.

Watson pointed toward a stone stele nearby.

"Look, it's a record stone. Let's check our rank. I wonder how well we're doing."

Damon remembered the emperor mentioning it during the briefing, the stele displayed rankings based on medallion counts.

Watson pressed his hand to it, channeling mana. The magic seals lit up.

Damon stepped closer, curious, until he saw the result. His face darkened.

"Huh... what? I'm dead last?"

Even Wendy and Watson were ranked higher than him.

"Who's in first place?" Damon asked.

Watson looked up, his jaw tightening.

"It's...lady Evangeline Brightwater."

Damon gasped, feeling jealous.

"She's cheating."

Highly unlikely it was jealously speaking.

Chapter 694: Tax

"Wow, Lady Brightwater is something else, she's in the lead."

Damon clicked his tongue, rolling his eyes.

This almost reminded him of when he was at the bottom of the academy rankings and Evangeline was all the way on top.

These days he was undisputedly on top of his grade, which was saying a lot. However, Evangeline being on top was surprisingly unexpected to him.

"What about Lilith Astranova..." Damon asked, sitting on the ground cross-legged.

Watson looked for her name until he found it. "She's number seven on the ranking, right next to Princess Moonveil."

Damon nodded, noticing the number two on this ranking was actually Leona.

The rest were different people, including some demon heirs. The third place was held by a young demon who carried the name of the demon lord Adramelech.

"Hmmm, we won't be able to gather many medallions. We already lag too far behind."

Watson analyzed their situation with a frown on his face. Damon understood what he was saying. While they had fought a few battles, from the demons to fighting Wendy.

Damon had fought a few high-level battles, but none of them involved him killing his opponents or even taking their medallions.

"We need a quick way to gather them..." Waton whispered, trying to think of a variable solution to their problem.

Wendy didn't add anything; she just watched them. She didn't particularly care for the whole war game.

Damon smiled, looking at the distant horizon and the rest of the arena spread before them.

"I have something in mind."

He stood up, holding his head slightly.

"For now, there's no need to hunt anyone or anything."

Waton narrowed his brows with an inquisitive look.

"How do we get medallions then... if we don't hunt?"

Damon sighed, feeling a pang of disappointment.

"Why isn't that obvious? I didn't expect a prince to not understand something so simple."

Waton was confused. "What is it that I'm not understanding?"

Damon chuckled with an evil smile. "Tax."

Waton was even more confused by Damon's words. What did tax have to do with their current predicament?

Damon made a circle on the ground with his fingers.

"Look, this place has the dungeon gate at the center of the arena with four bridges that lead to it. However, each of these bridges is guarded by powerful monsters and is treacherous to cross."

Watson narrowed his eyes. "How do you know that?"

Damon smiled, touching his finger to his head. "I have a sixth sense for that."

That was a lie. His shadow clone had already reached the center of the arena and investigated those bridges, having seen what was there.

He didn't try to cross yet, knowing the monsters there were strong.

And acting as a powerful demon lord, he would not hide from monsters.

Damon was planning to have his shadow clone, Amon, kill one, and when he passed, Damon would show up and take over the bridge.

'I simply have to kill the weakest of the monsters and let my true body take over bridge operations.'

He tapped his makeshift map. "We take over one bridge, or better yet, we destroy the rest."

Watson still didn't know what this had to do with tax.

Damon held his head as blood filled his throat. Shaking his head, he ignored the pain.

"I want to charge a toll to anyone passing the bridge. We take eighty percent of their medallions, let them keep their lives, and maybe their dignity."

Watson blinked with an expression of shock.

"Tax... I think you just described highway robbery."

Wendy sat there listening, watching them, but didn't say anything.

Damon waved his hand dismissively. "Don't be ridiculous. This isn't robbery, it's tax."

Watson bit his lips, unsure of himself. "You intend to take this tax by force, right?"

"Ahem, ahem." Damon cleared his throat, feeling his head heavy as an anvil. "Only if they refuse to pay."

Watson leaned closer. "That's what robbery is."

Damon shook his head in disagreement. "I'm pretty sure I just described how tax works."

Watson gritted his teeth. "Tax offers a service in return."

"Yeah," Damon nodded, "the service of keeping their lives, the service of walking on my bridge. I mean, how else are we going to maintain the bridge?"

Watson closed his eyes. "We aren't building anything though."

Damon shook his head with a pained frown. "No, worse. We are maintaining delicate infrastructure."

He glanced at Watson. "As a prince, you have to understand since you're part of the system that taxes everyone. This I'm learning from the empire's example."

Watson bit his lips as the broadcasted orbs zoomed in on him.

"Those taxes make the empire great. They fund our great lifestyle."

Damon's eyes were deadpan. "Yeah, the empire takes from the poor to feed the rich and uses that money to fund its wars. It's a very beneficial system."

His tone was sarcastic, but Damon was actually taking a jab at the empire for its policies on tax.

Watson sighed, knowing Damon was speaking the truth.

A lot of money went towards wars rather than fixing and making the lives of the people better.

This was the fallacy of every empire catering to the rich and powerful while the weak suffered.

"How do you intend for us to even coerce powerful warriors into giving up their medallions to us?"

He glanced at Damon, who was breathing heavily and clearly in no condition to fight.

"Wendy is the only one in condition to fight. You need rest."

Damon chuckled coldly.

That was true. He was in no condition to fight now and needed rest to recover. But he still had Matia, and he had sent Croft to find Renata.

Add their power to Wendy's, and he would be able to extort everyone who came.

Damon stood up, shaking the dust off himself.

"Don't worry about that. All you need to know is they will give us their share. After all, why fight us when they're so close to the main and final battle?"

He smirked. "Relax... I got everything under control."

#### Chapter 695: Horde

A beam of light descended from the heavens, engulfing his form as broadcast orbs poured from the sky, swirling around him in a slow orbit that followed the radiant glow.

He didn't change his expression. His face or rather, the absence of one remained calm. He was faceless, a darkness given shape. From the outside, he appeared as nothing but darkness, a silhouette molded into the vague form of a man.

Those who saw him couldn't tell if he was male or female, tall or short. In truth, he appeared different to everyone who looked upon him.

This was Amon the infamous, supposedly immortal demon lord who had slain the heir of House Ravenscroft inside their very citadel, right under the nose of Godwin Corbin Ravenscroft, a man of the Seventh Class advancement.

He had invaded and killed the grandson of one of the most powerful beings in the world.

How could such a name not be known? Yet, strangely enough, the name was all that was known about this enigmatic figure.

No one knew what his powers were, what attribute he wielded, or what weapon he favored. Only one fact stood uncontested: Godwin the Singularity had failed to kill him. Grand Duke Brightwater had failed as well.

He had crossed paths with hunters and heroes with long histories of slaying demon lords, yet he still lived. To add insult to injury, they were watching him now, powerless to act.

His gaze was fixed on the bridge ahead as these thoughts drifted through his mind.

A mysterious and unkillable enemy known only by a name.

'How could they not fear... Fear of the unknown is the most primordial of fears.'

Damon was sure of it. What made the Duhu Mountains so terrifying was the mystery, their inability to comprehend the horrors lurking within.

'Ignorance is darkness... and we all fear the dark.'

Just as he didn't know what lay beneath the shadowed waters below the bridge, only that whatever dwelled there was powerful.

His eyes locked on the large island hovering at the center of the arena. That was where the entrance to the World Dungeon lay. To reach it, everyone had to cross the bridge unless they could fly, though that would be most unwise.

The sky above was gloomy, heavy with sorrow, as though the heavens themselves were on the verge of weeping ready to drench the world with their grief.

"How sad the heavens must be to watch all the blood that is shed on this beautiful earth."

He raised his hand, clenching his fist slowly.

"Man can create beauty but chooses to live in ugliness."

His gaze turned toward the floating orbs, taunting the audience watching from afar, knowing every one of his enemies was witnessing this.

"You fight needlessly. You deceive children with beautiful promises of elegant rewards, yet you send them to face me... death."

Damon knew the world was watching. He made sure his voice was cold and empty.

His role as Amon was to embody an overwhelming force of violence, an invincible villain.

A demon lord.

However, what kind of demon lord ruled without minions? That would be as blasphemous as calling the Goddess of Doom a false god.

"You made one mistake... do you know what that is?"

His voice was husky and chilling, heavy with certainty. Here and now, he was untouchable. Even if they managed to kill him, it would only cause his true body a brief moment of unimaginable pain, nothing he wasn't already used to.

"This arena was built to show your goddess races killing demons... a shame you didn't anticipate I'd be here."

He walked toward the edge of the bridge, gazing into the dark waters below. The light still illuminated him, casting a white glow upon a form born of darkness. He lifted his hand slowly, a thin smile curling across his unseen face.

From the depths, red eyes shimmered to life dozens, then hundreds. His senses reached out, brushing against the minds of the demon beasts below.

The water began to boil. Damon pushed his Demon Dominate skill to its limit, pressing his will upon the simple, savage consciousnesses beneath.

"Demon Dominate," he whispered.

"Rise."

From the depths, a massive shadow surged upward. A dark head broke the surface, followed by a monstrous body that sent waves crashing against stone. Water splashed violently, spraying the banks and cracking the rocks beneath its weight.

Its scales were rough and brown with jagged black patches, its long serpentine body glistening under the light. Venom dripped from its fanged jaws. Large webbed claws dug into the ground as it loomed before Damon.

No, before the faceless entity that had mastered it.

Damon or rather, Amon, as the world now called this avatar stood before the beast. It was vast, powerful, easily at the peak of the Third Class, and it was not alone.

Dozens more stirred in the depths. Strange, bipedal demons surfaced next scaled like fish, with wide ears, webbed limbs, and eyes like molten coals. They towered over men effortlessly, their bodies glistening with damp, black sheen.

All these demons now bowed to him, bound beneath his control. He turned, and behind him, more figures emerged from the shadows. A vast horde gathered from every direction, drawn by his call.

These were the demons he had summoned while hiding in the shadows. Now that his preparations were complete, his army stood assembled, a chaotic tide of creatures united by his will.

This was his demon army... or rather, a horde of demons enslaved under Demon Dominate.

His gaze drifted once more to the dark waters and the colossal beast he had raised.

Not all within were demons, some were monsters beyond his influence, and he could not dominate them.

A shame, truly, since he was here to aura farm.

'I just can't let them live now.'

He looked at the creatures still lingering below and gave his command.

"Kill them all."

There was no hesitation. His controlled demon beasts dove into the water, roaring and shrieking as chaos erupted. Waves churned violently, crimson foam rising as the massacre began.

The water soon turned red blood, flesh, and torn limbs mixing with the water until it became a thick, murky stew of death.

Silence followed.

Damon stood amid the stillness, surrounded by his demon horde. This, this was power. He had power. This was domination. This was the Usurper.

He took by force and therefore feared none.

Just as he prepared to march his army across the bridge, he stopped. Slowly, he turned.

From the distance, a small group of demon youths approached him.

Chapter 696: If It's Him, I Would Surely Lose

A young man with long white hair and a pointed horn flew through the sky, watching Damon with an unreadable expression.

His aura was powerful, almost overwhelming to those who felt it. It was as if anyone who saw him had to fall in line, enthralled by his presence and forced to bow under his control.

This was Bakemon Baal, the son of one of the strongest demon lords.

Baal of Order.

His attribute, as his name suggested, was Order. It was one of those unnecessary, overpowered conceptual magic attributes, and Bakemon had inherited it fully. Without a doubt, he was the strongest of the demons gathered in the arena.

'And from the looks of it, his farming aura.'

Damon thought unseriously, watching the young man floating above him without a shred of respect. The flashes of lightning behind him gave Bakemon an intimidating, otherworldly appearance.

But Damon was tired of raising his head. Even though he had only glanced up once, he still lifted his hand, pointing casually as he shaped his will into a knife and shot it straight at Bakemon Baal.

[Demon Dominate]

Before Bakemon could even react or say anything, he felt a fierce will invading his mind. It shattered his mental defenses with terrifying ease, and for a brief moment before he regained control, his consciousness went black. His mind was on the verge of being taken over.

However, he managed to resist it, though the wind howled past his body.

"Hmm... wind? What wind..."

His gaze was fixed on the sky, which seemed to spin and grow farther and farther away.

It was then he realized, he was falling.

He opened his wings just in time, twisting his body and stopping his rapid descent right before he could crash into the ground. He stood slowly, landing on his feet as cold sweat beaded down his forehead.

"Wha... what was that... how..."

He tried to make sense of it, but all he could recall was the will giving him a single command.

"Fall," he muttered. His body had obeyed that order. He fell, he actually fell. This power was...

"Is... is... was that... domination..." he uttered quietly, looking up at the figure standing in front of him.

This power was without a doubt domination. But he couldn't be sure, it might have been something similar. And the only being known to possess true Domination was Ashcroft, the Demon Lord of Domination himself.

He raised his eyes to look at the mysterious, hidden figure, this unknown entity standing before him.

'Could this be Lord Ashcroft...'

Ashcroft was a legend. Every child in the demon continent was raised on tales of his greatness. He was invincible. Ashcroft was an all-encompassing, overwhelming force.

He was the Dominator.

Bakemon almost knelt but stopped himself.

No... this wasn't Ashcroft. Why would the great Lord Ashcroft need to hide his face or call himself Amon? The Ashcroft he had heard of was the most arrogant entity in all of Aetherus.

Why would the Dominator hide? Hiding was not domination.

He straightened himself, his long white hair flowing in the wind as he glanced around at the demon beasts that had gathered all under the control of this person who might or might not be the Dominator himself.

This strangely terrifying entity.

The other demon youths behind him stood still, silent and unmoving. He had already established himself as their leader, and in the demon continent, strength decided everything.

Just as Ashcroft ruled through power.

He was their head. If any of them wanted that position, they would have to prove it with strength.

Still, he had come here to see this Amon for himself after Kashi and Manta Astaroth claimed they had been saved by him.

"Greetings, I am Bakemon Baal, son of Demon Lord Baal, Lord of Order."

His greeting did not provoke any reaction from the faceless entity calling himself Amon. However, this Amon was clearly on their side, since the goddess races wanted him dead, and he commanded demons.

Bakemon slowly turned his eyes toward the demon beasts to see the family crest that should have bound them. But to his shock, there was none. These demons simply obeyed.

His eyes flickered, but he stayed calm. His suspicions about Demon Dominate were confirmed, though he still didn't believe this was Ashcroft.

Damon didn't particularly care who this was. While strong, this was still a demon at ninety percent power—he could destroy him with ease. However, his goal was to play the villain, and what kind of villain didn't have minions?

Bakemon was an arrogant heir, but not a fool.

"I lead all the demons present here today. I have come to make you an offer... join forces with us."

Damon stayed silent. Then, as Bakemon and the other demons waited, a deep fog spread from his body. Their hearts began to pound faster, hands trembling. The weaker ones found it difficult to breathe as a suffocating aura of fear blanketed the area.

"Join you..." The voice spoke coldly, like the chill of winter itself.

A heavy silence fell over their ranks as the demon beasts around them began to growl, slowly surrounding them with monstrous eyes gleaming in the darkness.

Bakemon gritted his teeth. Never in his life had he been put under this kind of pressure. This was different from facing his father or even another demon lord. This was horror, a chilling disconnect between body and mind.

It was a strange kind of fear.

He forced a smile as cold sweat continued to bead down his face.

"Yes, my lord," he said, adding a deeper tone of respect as he stepped forward, acting as the representative.

Choosing his words carefully, he glanced at Damon, knowing that if he truly was a demon, he would humor him.

This was his way of knowing, if this was indeed Ashcroft, then so be it. If he lost, so be it.

'But Lord Ashcroft is invincible. If it's him, I will surely lose.'

He took another step forward.

"I would be honored if you would humor me in a friendly duel. Surely you would be victorious and secure command of all demons here."

Damon smiled, understanding what Bakemon was getting at. The guy was eloquent. If Damon refused, the demons would have no reason to show him loyalty.

He glanced at them, waving his hand as the demon beasts slowly backed away.

"You may all attack together if you wish."

Chapter 697: Frost Dominate

His words were met with silence. The arrogance in his tone only made the demon heirs more convinced of his power.

Who else but someone with the strength to back it up would be so arrogant?

Though they probably didn't know about Damon's arrogance, he was arrogant regardless of the situation—it was in his blood.

Was it pride or vanity?

Damon would say he prided himself on having no pride.

Bakemon shook his head and walked forward.

"I alone would fight."

Damon nodded, his gaze fixed on the silver-haired demon before him. His attribute was strong, but Damon had no intention of letting him use it, or anything else in his arsenal.

He would dominate the demon's mind and subjugate him.

There was always the possibility that Bakemon might use a magical artifact capable of resisting Demon Dominate's control, but that didn't matter much to Damon. If he did, Damon would still crush him the good old-fashioned way, with his fists.

Which was good, since it would meet the level of requirement expected with the demon heirs present.

Though it would be troublesome if he fights to the death.

A silence spread through the arena as the area before them was cleared of everyone and everything. It was just Damon and Bakemon now.

Kashi watched the standoff with Manata by his side. Amon remained illuminated by the bright light from above, his dark, faceless form still and unmoved.

Bakemon raised his foot to take a step. A sonic boom echoed as he spread his wings, giving himself more lift.

Damon didn't move. His form remained still even as the massive booms from Bakemon's magic reached him. Slowly, he raised his hand.

"Dominate."

The fierce will of the Dominator surged forward, piercing Bakemon's mind. Then, in that split second, Damon took a step, appearing right in front of him with the Flash Step skill. Grabbing Bakemon by the horn, he slammed him into the ground face-first.

A huge crater formed beneath his feet as the demon heir's face shattered the earth.

Damon lifted him effortlessly and tossed him aside.

"If I wanted it, you would be dead."

Bakemon stood up with a bleeding nose, his face covered in soot, yet he smiled, his grin stretching from ear to ear.

He was right. He had confirmed what he wanted to know. This was surely Domination.

Bakemon didn't attack. The fact that he was only smashed into the ground was mercy enough. The Dominator of legend would have demanded an arm or a leg—if he was in a good mood—for even daring to challenge him.

His eyes turned toward Damon's still figure.

'He must be in a great mood... I was lucky...'

Bowing his head, he fell to one knee.

"I yield."

Damon raised his eyebrows, though no one could see it beneath his faceless form.

"Why not fight?"

Bakemon wasn't a fool. He smiled slightly, knowing that if this truly was Ashcroft, there was no one in this arena capable of defeating him. Surely, this was all part of some greater plan.

'This must be Lady Paimon's reason for bringing us all here.'

He kept his expression calm.

'I have to live and alert my father. Paimon is trying to gain favor with the Dominator... it must be part of a larger plan to change the seating of the Demon Lords.'

His thoughts raced, but his reply to Damon came quickly.

"I have acknowledged that only you are worthy of leading us demons in this war game."

Damon didn't really know what was in this demon's head, but he didn't care.

This worked for him just fine. He would use them well.

The other demon heirs fell to their knees, accepting this new leader.

With this action, Damon heard a low chime.

[You have leveled up]

That was his level-up requirement: to subjugate seventy-two demons. However, it never specified what kind.

Damon had assumed it referred to demon kin, but it seemed he had to dominate them, so he had put it off to focus on completing the chain quest.

'Here I thought I had to violate their minds and enslave them.'

The system chimes continued until he heard another notification.

[You have awakened Domination Fragment: Frost Dominate]

Damon kept his expression calm, but inwardly he was surprised. This was the first time he had awakened a skill unrelated to his shadow after leveling up.

'Is this related to my Domination attribute?'

He had devoured and obtained Ashcroft's attribute, and Ashcroft possessed the ability to dominate virtually everything.

He could feel a new facet of the Domination attribute taking form within him. Its control deepened, his aura becoming colder, heavier, and more overwhelming than before.

He was eager to test this new power, but he remained calm.

Looking at the kneeling demons, he waved his hand.

"Rise."

They slowly stood up, though some of them seemed to wonder why Bakemon had given in without a full fight.

It seemed they weren't satisfied with Damon's display of strength.

Honestly, it must have looked like Bakemon simply forfeited after one exchange.

It must have seemed as if Damon had caught him off guard.

'Ahhh, I really can't have dissent so early in the game.'

Well, that was fine. It was a good thing he had Tyrant Mastery, he could act like a tyrannical ruler if needed.

"Does anyone else here have an opinion?"

No one spoke as Damon walked through their ranks.

His demon horde snarled at them, watching with hostility.

His horde was intimidating, perhaps that was the problem.

"You are free to challenge me for my position."

Still, no one spoke. Damon stopped in front of a burly demon.

Raising his finger, he pointed forward.

"You seem to have an opinion."

The demon lifted his battle axe with a frown.

"You seem strong, but clearly Lord Bakemon held back to avoid infighting among us, especially since we are so outnumbered by the goddess race. You are—"

Those were the last words he ever spoke.

He and his axe were now forever frozen, transformed into a solid block of ice where Damon had pointed.

"Frost Dominate."

The chilling air that followed silenced everyone, their fear palpable at this ruthless display. But that wasn't all.

Slowly, the demon heir's frozen form began to sink, devoured by hungry shadows.

[You have slain Netel Ipos]

Chapter 698: My Great Enemy

The smell of fear was thick in the air. It was interesting to see these young demons act with so much fear, the fear that they could be killed under the whims of this new overlord they had found.

Acting as his second-in-command, Bakemon bowed softly.

"What do you wish to do, my lord."

He spoke those words calmly, keeping his trembling hands steady. Demon Lord Ipos wasn't going to be too happy about losing a son, but that was not his problem.

Damon kept his expression calm. What a strange sight this was, a group of demon heirs all serving a human. Things would go south very quickly if they ever found out that he was, in fact, not a demon but a human.

However, Damon didn't care. He wanted them to remain under the impression that Amon was Ashcroft, but at the same time, he didn't confirm anything. Faceless was a skill that naturally made it difficult for anyone to identify anything about him — even his skills.

[Skill: Faceless]

[Description:]

The face is a lie. The name is a leash. The soul is a chain. Those who wore none could not be bound, neither by fate, nor memory, nor death.

The Face Stealers did not kill to feed; they devoured to erase. And now, that curse has become part of you.

Your presence is like mist in the wind — felt, but never grasped. You are no one. You are everyone. You are forgotten before you are even seen.

They will look and forget.

They will hunt and find nothing.

[Effect:]

Distorts the world's perception of the user — erasing sight, magic, voice, and presence. Even unique abilities leave no trace.

But the longer it remains active, the more it distorts the user's own sense of self.

[Type:]

Active

[Cooldown:]

0 seconds

As for the side effects, well, Damon hadn't experienced any so far. He had never used Faceless on his main body, only on his shadow clones. Maybe that was why he didn't forget his actual identity or come under any side effects. He had his true body as an anchor to remind him of who he was.

His silence only made Bakemon more uneasy. His role as leader had been to protect and ensure the demons were not only victorious but alive to retell the tale.

Damon walked slowly toward the bridge. No one spoke. No one dared, except Bakemon.

"War games..." Amon spoke. Damon had wondered why it was called that.

Now it made sense.

"The objective of the war games is to simulate a battlefield, except it was supposed to be a chaotic battle royale until only the strongest and most cunning were left, giving them the chance to enter the world dungeon."

His voice was slow and calm. Bakemon nodded.

Still, Damon continued.

"However, the circumstances have changed drastically..."

His cold tone was met with silence as the demon youths glanced at each other.

"The goddess races and demons, now we have two ancient enemies in one place with the sole objective of entering the world dungeon."

Bakemon narrowed his eyes. He had an inkling of what Damon was getting at, and this was the reason why he had called back all the demon heirs.

"It is as you said, my lord. This is a war game."

Damon didn't say anything, seeing this as a splendid opportunity.

"Both factions will form an army and fight the other. That is how it will end when we all meet on the main island across the bridge."

He glanced at Bakemon, whose eyes flickered.

"They don't seem to realize it yet, my lord. It seems we have the advantage. We can gather resources and supplies, and with the demon beasts, we can even the number disadvantage on our side."

Damon didn't say anything. His mind was on something else.

Oh bother, how am I supposed to tax people if it's going to end up as a war... objectively huh..... wait, I still can.

"Do not be so quick to judge them."

He turned to the demon heirs.

"Among them there are already people who realize that. People like Lilith Astranova, Renata Malcrist, or even the daughter of Kronos of Valtheron, Abellona of Valtheron. To name a few, surely they know."

He waved his hand dismissively.

"Though they are of little consequence."

Bakemon let out a sigh of relief. It seemed everything had been under his control after all.

"No one can match your power, my lord. You are invincible."

Damon paused, his voice somber and cold, as if he were speaking about his greatest nemesis. The demons could feel the raw hatred coming from his tone.

"There is one that may... no, he will certainly be a problem. Of that, I am sure."

Bakemon frowned as he heard whispers from the demon heirs behind him. He gulped slightly. Surely this was Ashcroft, who could give him any problem?

"Wh... who could it be, my lord? The goddess races of this generation are strong, they have Seras Blade she can—"

Cutting him off, Damon raised his head as the ray of light continued to highlight his position.

"It's pathetic compared to what he is able to accomplish. He could take lives without even making a single gesture. In every spell he attempted, he was in a class by himself. Everyone viewed him as the ultimate warrior."

He paused, closing what appeared to be his fist.

"And I once fought a battle against him, putting my own life on the line. Compared to that, they are nothing."

Bakemon was chilled on the spot, his hands trembling as he tried to imagine who this terrifying entity was. He had never even heard that the goddess races had such a monster in their ranks.

"Who could this be, my lord..."

Damon paused, looking at the bridge.

"The Ascendant Damon Grey."

That name instantly made Kashi and Manata go pale. Damon remained quiet as they all took in the great name.

He was right in front of them, acting as if he was his own greatest enemy, but who else would he praise as the strongest?

"If he is here, I will face him alone. I forbid anyone but I from attacking him."

And with that, he had given himself immunity from demon attacks.

Chapter 699: First Day

It was a well-thought-out plan, with Amon acting as the villain for him. Faceless made it so that he could not be confirmed to be Ashcroft, at least not truly, which helped Damon. If he showed up and verified that this was Ashcroft and publicly took credit for defeating him again, this would make him the hero of the people who had been brainwashed and conditioned by the temple to view Ashcroft as a great evil.

Which meant the hero who defeated him was effectively untouchable, even by the temple, at least publicly.

With this move, the temple could not harm him in the name of justice or righteousness, because he was justice. He was righteousness.

Second, his plan gave him credit for stopping Ashcroft the first time and verifying Abellona's claims. Moreover, with his identity as Amon, he had ordered the demon kin not to attack him, which meant he would be able to assault and tax his fellow goddess race members freely, because the demons wouldn't dare go against the orders given by the suspected Dominator.

Oh, and he had an easier time getting his quest completed now. He had to stop himself from dancing for joy because, when he finally showed up and defeated Amon, he would get all that juicy money, all that wealth and fame.

His hands spread open as he raised into a demonic-sounding laughter, his demon horde standing behind him as he roared into laughter in the image of a terrifying demon lord.

No one wanted to be the first to speak, but clearly, someone had to. Damon had forgotten something important.

"My lord, how do we proceed?" Bakemon asked softly.

His words made Damon pause. Ah, that's right, he hadn't actually given them any orders on how to proceed.

He glanced at the bridge.

"We shall occupy the area around the dungeon gate, using that as our base of operations."

Bakemon glanced at the main island where the battle would take place.

"I understand. With our numbers, defending and securing such a large piece of land would be difficult. Our forces would be spread too thin. Would it not be wiser to lay in hiding until they had wilted themselves out with infighting?"

Damon already knew that, but he had his own plan.

"No need. We will destroy all the bridges, save one. This one, we will leave for them to cross."

He turned around, walking forward.

"If we destroy all the bridges, some of them may just fly across from any direction. After all, some of our enemies have wings, much like us."

Damon didn't have any wings, he wasn't a demon or a fae.

"By leaving a single bridge, they will naturally gather and cross it. Why go through the difficulty and risk flying in this dangerous terrain when they can easily cross a bridge?"

Bakemon's eyes flickered with understanding.

"I see. You want them to gather in one direction. Since they will all be using this bridge, we can expect them to attack from one direction. We can put the bulk of our defensive and offensive power there, while leaving scouts in other areas to prevent ambushes."

Bakemon could finally see part of his plan, though there was still a small problem.

"My lord, I am sure everyone is thinking it. While you are powerful, we still lack numbers. Thousands of them against a few hundred of us, including the demon beasts under your control... we are still outnumbered."

Damon didn't say anything. He was aware of that fact. Thousands of warriors from the goddess races against the demons would be a harsh battle. While demons were a powerful race, even they couldn't deal with overwhelming numbers.

If it was a series of unrelated groups, then the demons would have no problem. But if the goddess races decided to unite and organize into a proper military, then they would have serious problems.

Damon raised his hand.

"Heed my order. You are to go out and gather as many demon beasts as possible and bring them under my control."

Bakemon nodded slowly. Still, there was a problem.

"Between us all, we can't tame that many in such a short time."

Damon didn't even look at him.

"Who said anything about taming them? Herd them to me. I will tame them."

He glanced at Kashi.

"You will take the demons most suited for this task, along with half of the demon beasts, and gather more demons to my army. The rest of you, gather resources and begin to create a fortress."

He glanced at Bakemon.

"I will leave organizing this all to you. Do not fail me, Bakemon Baal."

Bakemon smiled calmly.

"I will not disappoint my lord."

The group of demon kin began to organize themselves like a trained military, using their knowledge of each other and the demon beasts. Soon, Damon had several squads of demons, each with their own unique functions.

Bakemon, being the son of the Demon Lord of Order, used his attribute to subtly guide the demon kin. They were prepared some scattered to find supplies or plunder them, others moved to destroy the bridges, and those with building capabilities were deployed onto the island, crossing the bridge to begin fortifications.

Among them, Damon noticed the young mysterious demon-kin woman with the hood joining them. His expression was calm, sensing no danger from her, yet he still felt a bit uneasy without even knowing why.

She was a priestess from the Snake Temple. Damon didn't quite like the idea of the priestess getting far or going anywhere. Still, she hadn't done anything wrong or suspicious, and he recalled Ishana, who had raised Lilith, was also one such priestess.

Lilith wouldn't mind if he killed her, but he didn't. He still chose not to.

"Priestess..." he called out as she set foot on the bridge.

She turned her hooded face toward him, bowing slightly.

"Stay by my side," he ordered, his words causing no change to her body language.

She bowed, accepting his order, and stood quietly behind him.

Hopefully, this would put a damper on whatever the unknown god was planning, or wait, maybe her being here with him was the plan.

Damon gritted his teeth, unsure if he should just let her go about her duties. Still, he gazed out into the distance.

God was truly the best of planners, and the unknown god was one hell of a planner.

While everyone was fighting to gather medallions, Damon was building his army. With that, the first day came to an end.

#### Chapter 700: I'm Coming For You

It was not the same place Damon landed when he came to the arena, but everyone landed in a different position.

For Sylvia, she landed in the most annoying place possible. When she lifted her head, she was standing right—

Of course, she was not far from the pest her father had following her around these past few days.

She sighed, feeling mildly irritated with her circumstances.

The ground was hot and black with red glows, and the smell of sulfur filled the air. Obsidian formed in the cooled-down parts, yet the heat was still great, brushing past her skin with the intoxicating scent of the volcanic region.

This was a pleasant new experience. She had never been close to an active volcano before, neither did she ever imagine she would see one.

However, this moment was easily ruined by her company.

The elves around her were all from the Moon Glades. Not all of them were here, but those who were belonged to the knights, they must have been sent in after her.

No surprise. Her parents didn't want her participating in the war games. She knew they would not agree, so she never asked. Especially since they were under the impression she was pregnant.

The young man walked toward her, pulling off his helm.

"Princess, how fortuitous! We did not get separated in this arena. Worry not, I will protect you."

Sylvia didn't even react, only admiring the view as the sky fogged up with volcanic ash.

"I wasn't worried, and you are far from being enough to protect me."

Her gaze didn't even lift to meet his. It might not have been visible to them, but Sylvia was actually looking at a book floating in front of her.

This had been her guide. She had used its instructions to slip away from her parents before the demon lord Paimon arrived, and with the distraction, she had entered the war games.

Her words made him bite his lips, but he held back his emotions, knowing the princess had been brainwashed by that wretched human, Damon Grey.

With a soft nod of his head, he ordered the elves to take a protective formation over Sylvia, but she didn't seem to care.

Her attention was solely on the glowing of the volcanic region, its orange embers causing the usually reticent princess to smile as her grey eyes captured the glow.

Her beauty was bewitching to him. Even if she was carrying the bastard child of some human, he still couldn't help but be mesmerized by her charm.

This thought only made his hatred for Damon Grey grow deeper. Surely that human had tricked their naive princess and had his way with her.

How can someone with such a deep interest in something so mundane not be innocent?

Sars gritted his teeth, standing behind her as he imagined what it would have been like to taint such a flower.

Sylvia sighed, turning her head slightly.

"It's not unusual for men to have such thoughts about women. If anything, it's natural."

Her words made him pause. She didn't even glance at him.

"However, I can admit to the hypocrisy of my actions. If he was the one thinking it, I wouldn't mind. You aren't, therefore, you disgust me."

She stood up, her hair gleaming in the orange glow.

"I gave you several warnings to leave of your own accord. Still, I see you all the same. Clearly, no one here takes my words seriously."

His hands trembled at her words. Was it embarrassment, or shock that she could read or deduce what was in his mind?

His heart nearly pounced against his ribcage. Still, more than that, anger rose in his chest from her words. How come... how can a human be better? She wouldn't mind if it was the human who ruined her.

Sylvia closed her eyes with a resolved expression.

"You can still leave..."

Her words were cold and empty, as if she wasn't even referring to a person but to a bug that had crossed her path. No, Sylvia was more compassionate to bugs than to this elf.

Sars bit his lips. He had never seen her put on such an expression. The princess who was kind and gentle, almost frail and bookish, was now cold as ice.

"I... I cannot leave you, Princess... I will prove myself, and I will be wed to you..."

Sylvia closed her eyes with disappointment.

"My father must have been really disappointed in me to have even thought of arranging a marriage with the likes of you."

Kadelas must have been shaken by her supposed pregnancy, that he wanted to marry her off since she refused to get rid of it. She would marry Sars, even if it was in name only or at least that was her father's thought.

Sylvia didn't care at all.

"I have made it abundantly clear that I despise you. I do not want to see you. The thought of you even being close to me makes me want to gouge out my eyeballs and peel off any part of my person that even comes close to touching you. Looking at you is what I do when I want to hate myself."

Sars' hands trembled, the insult, the humiliation, and the fact that she did it while the whole world was literally watching through the magic orbs hovering around them.

Still, Sars swallowed his pride and held steadfast to his desires and the wishes of the Elf King.

"You would choose that dirty human over your own kind?"

Sylvia's eyes grew cold, walking toward Sars with a chill in her tone.

"I warned you."

Sars wanted to say something as she approached him, but he could never have imagined in his wildest dreams what came next.

There was a flash of silver light.

From Sylvia's hands came a small coldness on his neck. He felt something warm trickling down. He touched it lightly, redness was the last thing he saw as the elven knights saw his head plop to the ground, a spray of blood bathing Sylvia's face.

Then his body fell.

She turned to them slowly, her gaze the most powerful they had ever felt, terrifying even.

"Does anybody else wish to join him?"

They all saluted, expressing their submission to her will.

She squatted down and cut out his heart, muttering to herself.

"I have the first ingredient for reaching the Third Class... Lilith Astranova... I'm coming for you."