

The Noble 386

Chapter 386: Information

'Did plan A work? Did that guy have no artifacts to save his life? Or were my pure intentions enough?'

a bit puzzled I pulled my hand lodged in his skull and even, just in case, kept an eye out until I finally felt that he had indeed died.

I was actually surprised at how easy it was. I already had plans up to E and I didn't think plan A would work. That one never works.

But more importantly, the situation was....

'Fuck, I was wrong about everything.'

Off the top of my head, I really swore this was involved with the sprout , but apparently my hypothesis was completely out of line because of some factors I didn't know about.

'Huehuehue, what a Sherlock fiasco you are, you idiot! You seemed so confident. That's why you should have stayed as Watson.'

'Shut up, you idiot, you concluded the same thing. Damn, we went for the obvious. Damn, I should have thought there was something fishy going on considering there are four factions in Vastlia instead of one.'

'Well, we didn't expect that bastard would have shown his true colors so far in advance. Now, there's the mystery of why everything went in such a way that our alternate self didn't find out about anything; he's quite capable of doing it like that.'

'I fucking know. That bastard is more disgusting than memories can show. I almost ran out of patience with how annoying he was.'

'Yeah, I hear you, but that guy already reached the ninth morphogenesis, we had to bide our time. When we saw that he had no artifact I thought it was because he had them too hidden, not that he had nothing to save his life. Was he that confident?'

'Who knows. It was good not to have to engage in an unnecessary fight. Although everything would be easier with the resonance... it really is a pity that the range of the resonance is only a day away by flying ship.'

It was the first time I had been progressively separated by such a long distance from the twins, so I was finally able to check the actual range of the resonance.

'It's a considerable distance, but still not far enough for cases like this. Too bad we don't have the materials to make another window and connect the spaces.'

'Yes, we had to resort to secondary methods to boost ourselves as much as possible.'

I really hadn't gone out carelessly. I made sure I was well armed, taking all the potions I had and reinforcement spells.

It seems that at this point in time most of the leaders are entering the ninth metamorphosis, but that didn't change that he was someone talented and could fight above his rank.

He is a faction leader who can easily fight against people of ten metamorphoses which is the current limit of the middle world.

So I had to find a way to empower myself as much as possible. I haven't gotten a decent demonic core, so demonization was out and resonance was out, and those were my two best power-up skills.

So I had no choice but to use the fucking hard to activate but powerful passive of my art 'the power of friendship', yes, placed in my head I had the ultimate empowerment artifact.

'Whoever made this art really wasn't right in the head, haah~, but I have to work with what's there!'

[[Enough is enough!!! I'm tired of all this, you piece of shit! You're the one whose head doesn't work right, you filthy piece of shit! Fuck, I feel like I'm the one having symptoms of corruption; if this keeps up I'll really go crazy]].

'Hey, why the sudden outburst, come to insult me and leave as usual?'

[[Shut up and listen, because I'll say it only once, you piece of shit who only thinks with his crotch down. The art of lust, as the name says, is based on lust, desire and pleasure]].

'Uh, yeah, I get that, that's exactly why I have to-'

[[Shut up and listen! 'Lust!' It's lust, you piece of shit. Do you think there's only carnal lust? Lust is more than that. It's a fundamental desire that can arise in a variety of ways, not just in the sexual sense. You can lust for combat, for killing, for blood, for humiliating your opponents, for tearing them to pieces, for seeing their faces suffer... anything that gives you pleasure and makes you lust for it is enough. The range is fucking wide]]

' (☹ ○ ☹) Oh... So you're telling me to imagine the battlefield as a beautiful woman I should fuck? That's even weirder... how do I picture her, redhead?'

[[Y-you... piece of shit... I swear- haah... aaaah... aaaah...!!!!]]

'Are you bimpervting? Okay, calm down, I'm joking. Yes, I understood what you said. Now it makes more sense. But, in my defence, I was just doing what worked for me. The information in my head wasn't specific, and you hadn't told me... That's why I'm saying you need to be more cooperative and communicative.'

[[...]]

'... Hmmm, but actually... it's still not an easy thing to achieve... Honestly, I don't like fighting, let alone the other things...'

[[Tsk, just find your way to use it properly without getting fucking panties in your head. You're going to make my legacy look ridiculous; you're going to make it be called the legacy of the pervert with panties on his head.]]

'hmm, but wasn't it that you and the other thirteen legacies faded out of existence at the end of each era? After that no one will remember, right, so what does it matter what I do?'

[[Shit!!, you even know that! What the hell is that thing that gave you all that information?]]

'huh? well... you know it was my alternate self from the first timeline, and yeah, this came to me in the last morphogenesis, a lot of things made sense that way.'

[[How the hell does that make sense? This is all so fucking contradictory that I don't understand. All of that should be impossible and you know it]].

'Well, with what I know now, yes... but perhaps the explanation will come later. Who can say we know everything? And it is something that happened, so it has already been proven that it is not impossible. Perhaps you do not know why it was erased from the Akashic records. Who says that only you can do it?'

[[Damn it! I'm really going to go mad. Talking about something so important as if it were nothing... That's why I don't want to talk to you, you nasty little bastard. Ugh!]]

'Me neither. If you're done, go away. I have to move.'

[[Fine! While it's true that we'll do as you say, that doesn't change the fact that this era is just beginning. I don't want to spend centuries or even millennia being the butt of jokes, so start behaving yourself, you piece of shit, you disgusting, repulsive imbecile.]]

'Hey, you're insulting too much, but I'll take what you said into account. I found a way; it's not like I like doing this in public either.'

That was welcome information at an unexpected time, but I would think later about the implications.

I took off my empowerment device and started paying attention to my surroundings and absolutely everyone was looking in my direction. They were still dumbfounded by what had happened.

Actually, since I have a lot on my mana stat, my brain is faster and more efficient with my thoughts, and even though I had a chance to talk to Quetesh, it hasn't been more than five seconds since I killed that bastard.

But now the bastard's minions seemed to be starting to wake up and act. They were watching me warily, not knowing whether to attack me or retreat.

I also looked in front of me at my brother who, luckily, didn't seem to understand the situation either.

"Ptoo!... okay."

Not forgetting to loot that bastard and give him one last spit and one last kick just because even dead he annoys me, I decided how to act.

This also caught me off guard in how it played out, so I had to improvise a bit.

'Okay, let's do it big.'

'Hahahahaha!!! This fool talks nonsense. Wasn't it funny how he didn't even last seconds to fail at what he supposedly learned?'

"" ... ""

Silence reigned in the place. The bewilderment had passed, but the situation to everyone still seemed very confusing and inexplicable.

I made sure to retract my morphogenesis aura almost immediately after killing Saelis, thus preventing anyone from making any unexpected moves and keeping them very cautious.

Originally I thought the greater possibility was that I had to watch and only act after everything happened, but the situation had changed.

The group that had subdued my brother was not large and only had the advantage because of Ophelia's poison, which unfortunately - as I thought - was involved.

That changed everything and gave me room to act. It was not a large and absolutely superior group that subdued my brother; it was just a bastard using tricks.

Even so, that guy, as far as I knew, was very powerful, and when no one saw me, I slipped into the shadows, reducing my presence with an artefact made with Elena and her blessing.

Honestly, due to the limited materials available, they are only artefacts made with simple and basic spells, but even the simplest spell crafted with Elena's blessing would hide me perfectly as long as no one was looking for me, or the other party was very powerful.

In the end, even though I prepared as much as I could, it was easier than I thought. Now it was time to clean up and put everything in order.

"Yeah, really fun, don't you think so too, 'Ophelia'?"

"Huehahaha, yeah, how silly. He thought he was the hunter; really, how silly."

"" ... ""

Everyone's attention turned to Ophelia, whose words didn't seem to square with who she was at all. And the reason is that I already took care of her.

Who was there was Number One, the idiot who using our experimental art almost caused a disaster. The only good thing was that the only one who died was him.

It was also timely, as I was able to create him here to help me, although Seraphina had to be replaced with the doppelgänger created by the doppelgänger... a doppelgänger who cannot use abilities nor can he use our full strength.

"But it was all within our plans."

"Everything was under our control. After all we are..."

""Those who move in the shadows.""(x2)

The title I thought I couldn't use has a chance to come up. This was getting more interesting; I realized that being known didn't matter.

I mean, it's like Batman: everyone knows billionaire Bruce Banner, but that doesn't stop him from being Batman.

At the time I still looked like David, but I quickly changed it.

"" ... ""

Silence, besides me, continued to reign. It doesn't really change anyone specific, but this made it clear that I'm not David. It felt good to finally stop pretending.

My doppelgänger did the same and started walking towards me, switching between gender, race and age, and so on.

To disguise it a little more, I also changed the appearance of some people with simple faces, including my brother. This will make everything even more disturbing and disconcerting.

"Hahaha, it really was easy to infiltrate, replacing some loners."

"Hahaha, no one noticed anything; after all no one approached us."

'Huy, this is cooler than I thought.'

Yeah, we're really just winging it but even on my brother's face there was doubt, wariness, and a lot of caution. I wanted to continue, but I made my point, and when my doppelgänger got to me, we both looked at my brother and talked.

"So, Raphael Silvercrest, you seem to have a little problem. Why don't we do a dea...? Huh? mother?" (x2)

What the hell, why is my mother here all of a sudden?

Chapter 387: Immoral Situation

'What the heck? Wait, those ears... uff! I was more scared than when Rosy dressed up as Aeloria.'

Something almost came out of my fright; I hadn't been paying attention to it, but the girl my brother was holding bore an almost identical resemblance to my mother Victoria.

"What are you talking about, what's your purpose, what do you plan to do with the antidotes and contracts?"

"Ah, yes, well... hmm, no, before that... can you tell me who that girl in your arms is and why she looks like m-your mother, Mrs. Victoria?"

"Huh? I look like who?"

The woman seemed puzzled by my words, but they are almost replicas, at least in appearance... except for her short pointed ears, typical of half-elves or dwarves.

She also didn't seem to have that soft, comfortable feeling and, of course, she doesn't have the aura of a milf, so she falls far short of my stepmother... wait, what was the point here?

I felt that I had strayed from what I had set out to do, but I really couldn't let it go.

She seemed unable to move much; apparently, detoxification from the poison is not immediate with the antidote.

And mostly I was curious that, even in this situation, she seemed very happy in my brother's arms...well, that was until I mentioned that he looked like my mother.

"This is Lirena Argent , my sub-leader, and she looks like my mother because her mother and my mother were sisters."

"What?!"

"What!!!" (x2).

There were three surprises: Lirena's, mine, and my doppelgänger's. Although it was a short and concise explanation, I just heard some puzzling things I didn't know.

"Who are you to be shocked? I am the shocked one here. Rather, Sir Raphael, what do you mean?"

"Yes, explain." (x2)

"...This is not the time for this... make your intentions clear. What are you planning to do? Are you going to let everyone die of poison?"

"I am an ally... I will help you, I will give you the antidotes, but, more importantly...what is this 'Argent' thing?"

"What is Mrs Vitoria's relationship with them? Is there something between you? Is there something immoral going on here? Do you have an Oedipus complex?"

My doppelgänger and I asked; it really got my attention more than anything else and I wanted to know the full gossip.

That girl I don't know, but she must have had the same fate as my brother; now that she will have a different ending, I wonder if there will be more things and connections than my alternate self came to understand.

'Yes, definitely, it's to understand the situation better.'

'Yes, and even if it wasn't, it doesn't matter. I am a noble lady; gossip and our status go hand in hand.'

'Especially if it's from our family.'

Yes, this was very much a priority. The shadow eminence and Batman stuff can wait for later.

"I don't know the reason for your question, but if you are not an enemy, I would appreciate it if you would first ensure the integrity of those present."

"Yes, yes, whatever... let's see, a full-scale purification... Lustratio Magna."

"...Lustratio Magna."

Me and my doppelgänger, who put on a mask, extended a large-scale purification.

I had already asked Ophelia, and she did not know how to bless the poisons she made; so, however dangerous, complicated, and difficult to purify they may be, as always, if they have nothing to do with a divinity, to me they are no different from any other poison.

"...so easily..."

"Yes, yes, it was very easy. Let's see, now..."

Since I took care of the poison, now only the contract remained, and I approached my brother while extending one of the sharp claws of my gauntlet towards his forehead.

"What do you plan to do?"

"Hey, don't look at me like that. I'm going to help you a little here, I'm going to help you with that contract; hold still, it'll just be a small wound."

I'm still not very good at distinguishing things like contracts and such, but I learned that, even without seeing it, if my legacy weapon makes a wound, even a superficial one, and I want some present contract to be broken, it will be done, just like the people who drink my mystery potion and come under my influence.

"..."

But it looked like he wasn't going to let me near his forehead, maybe because he just saw how I pierced Saelis' skull.

"Tsk, how cautious. Anyone would think you were a coward... including your sister if she ever found out."

"Ugh, w-well."

It seemed like mentioning myself worked well. This guy must definitely be like my father; memories of the original Seraphina told me so, but even after five years he seemed the same.

"Yes, it's just a little... well, yes, that's all. No contract, I also freed you from everything else, but I don't think it matters, does it?"

"Are you serious?"

"Yes, Well, we're done with the side issues. But I don't understand: my... Mrs Victoria is human, isn't she? And this girl here is a half-elf. If she's from the Argent, it makes it even stranger since they're all human. Explain that."

"Yes, Sir Raphael, even I am not understanding what you are implying."

"...I really don't understand your interest in this matter, but I thank the sirs or miss, for helping us. Please wait a moment...Sir Vasil, Clarens, can you take over while I talk to them?"

"...I...yes, I will take care of my brother's subordinates... I... no, sir Clarens, help me a little."

"Ugh, Vasil, I'll charge you extra for this fiasco just now. ugh! I feel like I lost years of life in there... it's all so confusing still, but you must be worse off. Okay, first things first."

If the two leaders stood up after my purification, that bastard's brother looked a bit confused, but seemed to quickly get himself in order and do as my brother asked.

My purification was more effective than the antidote; in fact, by concentrating on the gossip I almost forgot that bastard's subordinates.

Fortunately, instead of running away, they seemed to want to try their luck and attack me. If I looked, it seemed that they were cautiously taking advantage of the conversation I was having with my brother to surround us.

Unfortunately for them, I don't think they thought the poison could be eliminated so quickly, and all at the same time, without side effects, and before they could react, they were easily surrounded.

They tried to resist, but with two faction leaders and over a hundred people, it is only a matter of time.

"Ah, yes, besides that guy and that woman, there are ten other spies. Let's see, who were they? Ophel... I think I figured out who they were, but... ah, that one there is one... let's see... I'm not giving up, I forgot, look it up yourselves."

"...I'll keep that in mind..."

"well, now if I'm done, then, Raphael, go on: are you having an affair with your cousin who looks like your mother?"

"...No, she and I don't have a relationship of that kind. Ss. Isn't that right, Miss Lirena?"

"Y-yes..."

"Really? I feel like there's someone here not so much agreeing with that statement, don't you think so too, Number One?"

"Yeah, and that she looks so much like Miss Victoria... I smell immorality. Hey, break out the popcorn, this is definitely more than that and I feel like the more we know the better it's going to get."

"Cheese or caramel?"

"Hmmm, cheese? Ah, why decide? You take the caramel ones and I'll take the cheese ones."

"I don't understand what you mean by immorality...but in any case, I'll answer your other questions. As I mentioned, her mother and mine are twin sisters. Our grandfather was an elf and our maternal grandmother human, and both of them, instead of being born half-elves, were born different races."

"Oh, that's crazy. It's a very rare case, isn't it?"

"Yes, isn't it? I didn't expect the Argent and the Silvercrest to be connected."

"Neither did I! How come I only know this now?"

"Huh? Miss Lirena, didn't you know?"

"No! My mother died when I was very young, I never knew anything about my origins or my grandparents. For us Argent, it is very difficult to leave our home, especially for me, as I had my father's expectations and was almost locked up until I went to the academy. He never talked about my mother, and my other mother never knew her."

"You know what surprises me the most? That Mrs. Valeriene's sister would mess with the... nah, forget it."

I guess I won't say more; I mean, I myself have two people with that last name in my harem. Saying anything would be counterproductive, although I want to believe that the problem in that family is men... and I'll deny that I also have a friend with that last name, since, unlike his relatives, this one doesn't even catch a fly.

"Ugh, today has been the most shocking day I've ever had. I feel like I'm not able to digest a lot of things."

"Yeah, it must have been shocking... life is hard when you look like the mother of the one you like."

"Hey, you...I don't know what or what you are, and while I appreciate your help, you should stay out of other people's personal business."

"Hey, just pretend I'm not here, ignore my comments, oh! But in any case, the immoral one here is you."

"Shut up, don't talk nonsense! Who's an immoral one? Besides, it's all wrong, it's not even close to what you're talking about, hmph."

"What the hell, another tsundere? Fuck, why do they keep popping up? Is it something contagious or something as-? Will I wake up tomorrow saying 'hmph this, hmph that'?"

"I don't know what you're saying, but I feel like you're being rude to me."

"Nah, this is imagination...well, you're not my problem."

"Ngh! I definitely feel like... No, I'm going to ignore you like you say.. sir Raphael, so... I wonder if... the reason you approached me first...?"

"Yes, as you think. My mother asked me to take great care of you, as we are family too. I am really a bit dumbfounded that you were not aware of this fact. I think I mentioned many times that you were like family and-"

"Yikes! Don't tell me you somehow mistook that family-like approach for some other kind of interest and fell for it. Oof—yeah, you're really red. So it is something that—ugh!"

"Shut up, you fucker! You should know what to say and what not to say. o(≧□≦)o"

"Ugh! She's one of those violent tsunderes, ugh! Why me?"

What was the problem? I was just making some harmless comments. I mean, I just saved her from being crippled, she should be thanking me. But instead, she's strangling me, and the fact that she looks like my mother didn't help at all.

But for some reason, I don't think it's bad, but it's serious, because she has at least seven metamorphoses of strength, and the popcorn in my mouth is going down the wrong way.

'Hey, bastard, help me.'

'Which is not that you're going to die, but the situation is curious, isn't it? She seems to seriously like our brother, but that she looks like our mother gives her that immoral edge. More importantly: our brother wasn't lying, But I feel a little doubt coming from him... Perhaps he is also interested in her, even though he does not understand it yet.'

'Yes, here's something very good—good gossip; I have to take it to the girls. But now what do we do? We unintentionally broke our role.'

'What's the difference, let's forget that already. It seems we're not destined... Or wait, why don't we make Elena-'

"Huh!!!"

"Miss Lirena, will you... please stop? In fact, we owe them a debt."

"Ah! I-I'm sorry."

"... Oculus Fines"

Well, that didn't matter; my attention was diverted because at that moment I felt a glance on us and, as soon as he let go of me, I looked in that direction and improved my sight.

Apparently Saelis and those present were not everyone: there was someone else in the vicinity.

Chapter 388: Delayed Reasoning

"..."

When I looked in the direction where I felt the gaze, it was several kilometers away, but there was nothing there.

Neither where I felt it nor in its vicinity, as if they had simply disappeared.

Normally, even I, who was practising sharpening my senses, would not have noticed a simple glance, and I would have been too far away to perceive the mana of a spell or a surveillance device, but I was sure: I felt something, my keen instincts sensed it.

And now that I possess the 'Primal Regression' skill, which I copied from Lily and which, as a side effect, gave me a kind of beastly seventh sense, there is a high possibility that I did not imagine it, but there was nothing there.

This was strange, and I don't have enough experience with this skill; even so, I feel a strange pressure telling me not to waste time.

These are vague feelings that may well be just another thought, but I feel I must heed them and make sure.

I couldn't waste any more time.

"Is something wrong? If it's about Miss Lirena, I apologize for her. She's acting a little strange today, but I'm sure she didn't mean to offend or hurt you."

"I-I also apologize. I don't usually lose my temper like that, and besides, you are our benefactor and—"

"Stop, it's not that. I just thought I felt something. Well, that's enough, I've satisfied my curiosity. It's time to say goodbye, I have to go check something."

"...I understand, if you have something else to do, I won't get in your way, but I still think that this alone is not enough to thank you."

Hmmm, I was originally going to use the atmosphere and the moment to ask you guys for a few things, especially if anyone had obtained more items like the Ghost Vine or good materials, but I was intrigued, and now that everyone is free of poison, I'm no longer in a position to be demanding.

Not to mention that now I have to go see if this hunch was real or not.

"Well, I really don't want anything else. Ah! If you want to do something for me, give this to those guys and take them away, then judge them according to the law, hue~."

So, as a final act, I began to slip into the shadows along with my doppelgänger, but not before throwing a mysterious potion at my brother.

It's not like I want to save those bastard's subordinates or help them; rather, I feel like it will make things better and more advantageous for me.

"Wait, not yet—"

"No, that's fine, nothing else... ah, and be careful with that bastard lying there... he might ambush you or do something devious."

I warned my brother to be careful with Saelis; that cockroach isn't someone you can deal with by simply killing him once.

Although I will definitely kill him eventually, since he was on the elimination list, and now I will personally give him even more priority.

"Wait, what do you mean by—?"

"Huehue~, you'll understand. Don't let that idiot play dumb. Today you were definitely attacked by Saelis Aelenthyr. Make him pay for what he did to you."

And with that last remark, my doppelgänger and I disappeared. I like that feeling of leaving the situation a bit mysterious, and since I didn't have a chance to extort them, I came off as some kind of anonymous hero.

Being a hero sucks, but it's not bad to do things like that once in a while.

And just because I thought it was fun and situational, the last appearance I took before going in was that of William.

I felt that I had achieved my goal by coming here, in addition to securing the Lunarite for Rosy, so there's only one last thing left to do.

..

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"Fweeet~, Fweee~I'm walking through this dark cave, not being followed by anyone, Fweee~ I went...definitely no one is following me...ah! let's confirm that I'm here."

I was walking while whistling and singing; I was at the fire amethyst mine. According to my memories, this must be where the sprout is, the thing I originally thought was the cause of my brother's unfortunate event.

And in my defense, it's not unusual for me to think so, because buds are really important things to begin with, since who wins or loses this continental battle depends on them.

The Middle World follows its own rules, some different from those of my world or those of the demons.

This world creates a kind of law of physical form, and it is the same law that causes the rifts to exist towards the human and demonic world.

And the physical form is these sprout, which are literally little plants.

if you get enough of them together, you can begin to interfere with the laws of this world, primarily with respect to creating rifts.

There are six seedlings on this continent, and you need those six to win this continental battle for resources, and both sides knew that.

That's why it's everyone's main goal: to get the seedlings, as it would be equal to winning.

If the human side obtained it and closed all the cracks to the demonic world, it would isolate those inside with no chance of reinforcements or fleeing.

Not to mention that we could open stable cracks to the demonic world, being able to attack them in large numbers anytime, anywhere.

And the same vice versa: if they get the seedlings, we'd be more than screwed.

Although, under the regional contract, it was only enough to have a majority to claim victory and for the other side to retreat, so that a war would not start until the last one standing.

So, even if I didn't control the laws, getting four was my goal-as did Willian on the alternate line-and that would inevitably serve as a bridge to Talunhai.

So, in my plans, it was critical to take possession of these; and, luckily, I know where most of them are, and that was enough to end this much sooner than I should.

But the problem is that, for concepts I don't understand, these are still functioning as a real plant, and you have to wait for an auspicious time to take possession of it; otherwise I couldn't take it, let alone use it in any way.

For now I just come to make sure it is here and put more security around it.

I would very much like to harvest it and take it with me, even though it is not yet time. Although I have a method in mind, I do not have the necessary materials.

But I'm not worried because I know the harvest time thanks to Willian and his luck on the alternate line.

'Ah, but that's taking into account that this place becomes a hunting ground... hmm, will it take longer? Hmm, I feel like I'm overlooking something, what is it. Well it shouldn't matter'

I guess now it just remains to take care of the rest and although I originally thought this was the reason for my brother's crippling, I can't always be right, and it was a good thing it wasn't something more complicated than the pettiness of an unhinged bastard.

"You had to get through this wall and-"

Bang!

"Right! This is the first time I've felt it, but it has a certain aura of space runes... yes, this is it."

Following the memories, I finally reached the place. After breaking through one of the mine walls, I entered a gigantic room; it was a natural dome and didn't seem to be part of the mine excavation.

I remember that, by the time the bud is ready to harvest, this place is filled with many rare and beneficial plants, and I already see hints of some coming out, even if the only source of light is the faint one emitted by the fire amethysts on the walls.

I approached the sprout at the end of the room, which had no real protection as it seemed to have just emerged.

It was a small blood-red seedling coming out of the ground. In short, it was what I was looking for.

At that moment, I felt three presences behind me that also entered quietly, but when I looked at them.

'Shit!'

'This is bad.'

'Very bad.'

"Oh, I really didn't expect this. She's just a six-metamorphosis girl... hmm, but her mana is also the same as the one who broke into Saelis's affair—ah, she changed her appearance... that's a good skill."

"Yes, what His Imperial Highness says is true. She is the variable that Saelis did not expect; with how meticulous he is, it was a surprise that he failed, but even so, how could she interfere? No, she must have had more help. We didn't see enough. There must be some other people who left by the time we observed."

"More importantly, it doesn't seem like a coincidence that she is here. She seems more precise than us, although I don't understand why she came alone. If she had come accompanied by the whole group or her accomplices, we would have had no choice but to retreat as before."

"What does it matter; she probably didn't know about us and looked in our direction by coincidence. Hee~... but even though I know it's probably not her appearance, and she's human, she's very cute. I think I understand those crazy people who occasionally make mixed-race babies. Really... it's a great skill; I need her in my collection."

They were the source of the gaze from before; in fact, I had already discovered it before entering the mine because they stopped being cautious when they saw me alone, and I pretended not to notice in order to lure them in and finish them off.

Now I recognized all three of them. I knew who they were from the memories of my alternate self, and how ridiculous it is that the three of them are together at this moment and place.

It made me realize many things: that I wasn't entirely wrong in my deduction, how foolishly I didn't pay attention to the second clause that Saelis made my brother sign, and that once again things are moving in a way that is completely unknown to me.

There were only three of them, but each one was a difficult problem to deal with on its own, and I'm regretting playing dumb and ignoring them even though I knew they were following me.

I thought that, at most, they would just be Saelis' subordinates who stayed behind; they would be easy to deal with if I set a trap for them.

But I ended up getting myself into something bigger than I thought.

So I tried to calm down and needed to find a way to deal with this situation.

As they talked, I undid my morphogenesis and returned to my real appearance. That made one of them look at me with lust immediately.

Although I did it so as not to waste mana—since I'm considering the worst-case scenario—luckily it seems they didn't see much, as I noticed them almost immediately and they don't know what I'm capable of.

I could see the state of that so-called imperial highness, a turquoise-skinned demon, and I could only confirm that, unfortunately, he was who I thought he was; the others seemed tougher.

"Oh, but what is this!? Three handsome boys! Very powerful. Could you tell me what you want from this defenseless lady who only has six metamorphoses? Why don't we talk calmly?"

I really needed to know what they were capable of if I wanted to get out of this, so I threw my dignity to the devil and spoke to them flirtatiously while trying to seduce them, activating the charm at the same time.

It worked: the second and only human fell; for me, he was the most problematic because of his abilities, and seeing his state confirmed it even more. Running away was not an option.

"Hahaha, beautiful lady, are you trying to seduce us? You're doing well, but I need more than this to convince me. Why don't you show us a more beautiful and voluptuous appearance? Then I'll think about it some more."

"Your Imperial Highness... I don't think it's a good idea to play along. She's probably buying time and looking for a way out or something else."

"Tsk! What nonsense. She could be problematic if she had the whole group or those faction leaders—as you call them—but now she's alone and only has six metamorphoses. Besides, do you think I can't notice something like that? In the end, what can she do against the three of us?"

"..."

"What His Imperial Highness says is true, Mitrass. Besides, His Imperial Highness would not be fooled and is only interested in her ability. I also think she is very good, although now she must be fake too. If I am not mistaken, that is what Princess Silvercrest looks like. As far as I know, she should be in the city of Alvidrin; in fact, I even heard that she was injured in an accident a few days ago."

"Oh, come on, handsome guys! You can't leave me out of your conversation... hmm, we see that His Imperial Highness asked for it, and you, big guy, don't seem interested in humans. Why don't we try—?"

I couldn't miss the opportunity to be underestimated. Thanks to the problematic ability of the one who shouldn't be here, they know my real rank even though I hide it, but that very fact made them lower their guard even more.

The only one left was the last one, named Mitrass, a gray-skinned demon who was over two meters tall and pure muscle.

Since my appearance didn't captivate him, I quickly changed into the most seductive demon I knew: Aurora's mother. In addition, I made my breasts bigger, to the point that they almost overflowed from my clothes, and finally:

'Good, it worked.'

"Definitely—" Crack! "Something's wrong."

And just when I was feeling happy that I had understood these three, in an instant something I did not expect at all happened, a horrible pain overwhelmed me, and I began to fall.

I could only see the guy who had suddenly appeared behind me and had done the same thing to me that I had done to Sealis.

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Chapter 389: Nightmare Vision

POV: Third Point of View

"Damn!... why did you kill her? Do you really have the courage to do what you want? Did my acting carefree go to your head?"

Seeing Seraphina die with a twisted neck, the turquoise-skinned demon - until then with a relaxed attitude - immediately changed.

Noha left behind her carefree expression and adopted a grim and menacing look as she watched Mitrass, who had killed someone in whom he had taken an interest.

Noha did not like Mitrass's actions at all.

"I-I'm sorry, Your Imperial Highness.. I know it was arbitrary, but I felt a bad feeling and thought it best to finish her off. Who knows if she was planning something."

Sensing Noha's discontent and anger, Mitrass immediately knelt down and apologized sincerely, taking care of every gesture, hoping not to infuriate him.

But, even with that humble and fearful attitude, Mitrass' identity was not simple. He was Mitrass Valcryn, heir to one of the four demonic kingdoms and leader of an extremely powerful faction in the middle world.

A big shot on that continent. And yet, he was acting in servitude.

That made it clear that Noha's identity wasn't simple either.

"She only had six metamorphoses! What could she do? Tsk... she had excellent shapeshifting skill, something even I couldn't see through, even with the difference in rank. Tsk! I was going to make her my slave; what did it matter what she did? She could have taken on the appearance of those bitches and... shit!"

"...I really apologize, Your Imperial Highness. Something like this will never happen again."

"Tsk... Whatever. The mission my father entrusted me with is more important. If you weren't a key part of his plan, you wouldn't be breathing."

"I appreciate your leniency towards my actions, Your Imperial Highness."

Though his apology seemed calm and sincere, Mitrass clenched his fists. He never thought he would adopt such an attitude towards anyone.

He, who had always had unshakeable pride, was going through a humiliating situation. But he could not afford to offend Noha: neither he nor his kingdom could handle the consequences of doing so.

His pride was worthless in the face of absolute power.

"Tsk! You damned country bumpkin. Well, let's get going. Let's take that seedling. Tsk... it's really too bad."

Noha took one last look at the corpse, which for some reason resembled Seraphina again, with a slight gesture of annoyance before heading towards the sprout.

Mitrass fell in behind without a word, and the human did the same, keeping silent so as not to get involved in the conflict between demons.

Noha examined the sprout and, after a brief moment, brought his hand to one of the rings on his fingers. From it emerged what looked like a large transparent egg.

"Oryx, do your thing."

"Yes."

Noha called out to the human named Oryx. The latter, understanding the command, reached out his hand towards the seedling. In the next instant, it disappeared along with a portion of soil, reappearing inside the transparent egg.

"Good. All clear, as always. Having space affinity of such high rank is a waste in a backwater like this. Even though you're human, you'll make a great subordinate. I expect great things from you, Oryx."

"Thank you very much for the compliment, Your Imperial Highness."

"What a clever human. You averted the tragedy that was coming.... With this we have all six. According to the mana density and the size of this continent, it should be all of them. Now, with our techniques, they will mature faster, and with my father taking over the treaty, it won't be long now until-"

'Celeritas Radiata', 'Forza Lucida Fulminis'.

Boom!

"What was that you said, you BASTARD!"

"Oryx, step back with Your Imper-!"

'Dominus Nox Mentis', 'Reflexus Fulminis.'

As if a bucket of cold water invaded the place, a thick murderous intent spread, accompanied by a heavy voice, completely alien to the flirtatious woman of a moment ago.

'Aegis Luminis', 'Vigor Lignorum'.

That shouldn't be possible.

But there she was, as if out of a nightmare: standing with her head still turned in the opposite direction.

'Umbra Resilientia.'

None of them understood how it was even possible. Without any warning, she launched a brutal blow aimed at Noha.

Luckily, Mitrass noticed it at the last instant and stepped in and warned. By then, though, Oryx had already escaped, reappearing on the opposite side next to Noha.

There they were able to observe the unreal scene more clearly: Seraphina still had her head back and was actually looking directly at both of them.

'Lignum Spes', 'Obscura Lumen', 'Lux Umbra'.

The atmosphere became heavy as fast as Seraphina's attack. Murderous intent expanded, a pressure that shouldn't come from someone with only six metamorphoses.

Art of Lust, Third Stance: Seductive Touch.

BOOM!

Receiving no response, Seraphina launched a second, heavier blow against Mitrass.

"Ugh! What is this power?"

The first hit, though blunt, had seemed acceptable to her: someone with six metamorphoses might possess some reinforcing ability.

The second was different. Heavier. His hands faltered and he felt the damage penetrate his defences as if his armour were completely useless, and he took a step back.

That level of power shouldn't belong to someone of the sixth metamorphosis.

Still, Mitrass dismissed the blow. It had only happened because he hadn't really made an effort and that penetrating skill was perhaps due to a skill .

"Oh! But how... how curious. She really is alive."

Noha looked at Seraphina. The murderous intensity had taken him by surprise, but what was truly important was that somehow she was still alive.

He didn't care that she had a twisted neck.

In fact, that fascinated him even more.

his eyes sparkled like those of someone who had just found a unique toy.

"Oryx, stop her - don't kill her!"

"Yes."

He ordered Oryx, at his side, to stop her. The latter made a quick gesture and a silver beam shot out

The silver beam disappeared.

The next instant, it was about to sever Seraphina's legs.

But she, as if she had foreseen the attack even before it was executed, had already jumped back, avoiding the beam by a fraction.

The impulse drove her to take her distance. In the wide room, the three of them were left in different corners of the place.

Crack!

"Sensus Spatii", "Perceptio Amplificata".

Seraphina grabbed her head and, with a horrible sound, snapped it back into place, while what appeared to be spells with some strange function came out of her mouth.

Then she raised her gaze to the three men, stopping especially at Noha and the egg he held in his hand.

"What did you mean by the above?"

Seraphina stared at him, never ceasing to expel murderous intent. In her hand, what looked like a large golden spear began to materialize.

"Oh, you dodged that... and that murderous intent is really something crazy. I found something great when I least expected it."

"Your imperial highness, you must not underestimate her. She-"

"Shut up! I'm talking."

"Y-yes."

"Ahem, as I was saying... your rebelliousness appeals to me, and your quirks definitely give you a special place in my harem. And if just in case you're a man, I'll tell you that I don't care about that. It doesn't matter to me at all."

Noha didn't care about Seraphina's murderous intent, nor that she had already cast several spells and wielded a weapon ready to fight.

In fact, that seemed to excite him; the desire to possess her in his eyes only intensified.

He was clearly excited.

On the contrary, Seraphina completely ignored his words. She was still watching him firmly and decisively, assessing him, ready to attack him at any moment. The same applied to the other two.

Her gaze became even harder when she saw Noha casually stow the egg in his ring.

"What did you mean before?"

She repeated the question with a warning tone. An ultimatum.

"This is great, hahaha~. From your reaction, you must stay on the human side. And it's like you heard: this child's play is about to end. The regional treaty is about to expire."

"And what you said about the sprout?"

Noha seemed ready to answer, but even before he did, Seraphina felt a deep distaste for what he was about to say.

Still, she needed to confirm it. Understand the situation.

"Yes, I got them all, hahaha~. This continent was unlucky to have someone as capable as me overseeing it. With the seedlings in my possession, not only will I end all human traces in this world, but I will open the gates to invasion. Everything on the other side will fall as well."

"..."

"I see you don't look convinced. Hahaha~. But it suits you to follow me now, like that smart human did. Where I come from, humans aren't so discriminated against and make excellent servants. You, especially, I will give you preferential treatment. Your skills and abilities interest me a lot."

"...I understand."

That was enough.

Noha's words made it clear to Seraphina that she could not allow the situation to progress in that direction. She quickly organised her thoughts and objectives.

She had to take everything into account: not only what she saw of them when they directed their lust towards her, but every piece of information that her alternate self knew about the three of them.

Her mind, already fast and now reinforced with magic, was working on the edge, looking for a way out of a situation that, for anyone in her place, would be a sure loss.

"Oh! So you're willing to-"

"Art of Radiance, Third Stance: Sanctified Piercer."

And she did, she found the possibility.

She attacked.

Swoooosh- Boom!

The spear, like a bolt of lightning, struck with a roar that shook the place.

But Noha and Oryx were no longer there: they disappeared before the attack reached them.

"How dare you!"

Mitrass appeared in front of her at high speed. Seraphina didn't seem surprised that Noha had dodged and that her attack had no result; although there was clear annoyance on her face her attention quickly shifted and focused on Mitrass.

He wielded a heavy black sword, enveloped in a sinister, fiery aura directed at her.

Seraphina reacted instantly. The spear she had thrown reappeared in her hands and blocked the downward blow.

Art of Lust, Fourth Stance: Erupting Embrace.

On contact she immediately circulated her art, distributing the impact of an opponent whose strength reached the ninth metamorphosis.

Circulated. Absorbed.

Yet that power was beyond his control.

He gritted his teeth, the anger began to show more and more and he channeled the absorbed energy to strengthen his body and, with a sudden movement, changed the angle of the spear, deflecting the attack to the side.

Boom!

The heavy sword crashed to the ground.

Mitrass' side was exposed.

And Seraphina did not miss the opportunity.

Art of Lust, Second Stance: Ardent Pulse of Desire.

Chapter 390: Mitrass

Art of Lust, Second Stance: Ardent Pulse of Desire.

She reactivated her art, but this time she did not channel it into the spear. She concentrated the energy in her right foot and performed a horizontal sweep with all her strength.

swooshh!

Her leg became a sharp blade, tracing a horizontal cut straight to Mitrass' side.

"i...!"

But Mitrass reacted just as quickly. Using what seemed like the footwork of his own art, he stepped back and dodged the attack by the slimmest of margins.

Seraphina only sliced the air.

There was something odd here, she had seen it.

Name: Mitrass Valcryn

Race: Sanguivorax

Rank: Divine Metamorphosis

Gender: Male

Stats:

Strength: 866

Mana: 820

Agility: 470

Defense: 510

Vitality: 662

Skill:

Hematic flame (Ω)

Affinity with bloody fire (Ex)

Heavy Weapons Mastery (A)

Tyrannical body (A)

Repulsion (B)

Vital surge (B)

Battle Flow Awareness (C)

Mitrass specialized in strength, and his agility and speed-which, even with a movement technique, - shouldn't exceed the seventh metamorphosis, so here was something that didn't fit .

She watched him intently. Her blue eyes seemed to want to pierce him.

She followed Mitrass's flow of mana.

And she understood.

His gaze stopped on the peculiar black boots.

Some memories also came to his mind, these were definitely the culprits.

It was a common thing: if someone was talented, they would delve into that path, practice a proper art or breathing and become even stronger.

But that also created imbalances. Passive secondary stat boosts didn't always cover everything, and when talent in another area was too low, the weakness became obvious.

Especially in warriors.

Some tried to compensate by practicing arts for different purposes, taking care not to leave any too far behind, even if that slowed their ascent.

More common, however, was to resort to artifacts, weapons or equipment.

Mitrass's boots clearly covered his deficient speed stat. Upon closer inspection, Seraphina noticed that they were anything but simple: the aura they emitted was nothing to sneer at.

"Oh, what is that powerful technique? The spear was like a bright ray of light. I even felt a hint of danger. Interesting. Really fascinating... how capable is she? Mitrass, handle it yourself. Consider this your redemption, but make sure you don't kill her. There won't be any more chances."

"...I understand, Your Imperial Highness."

The exchange between Seraphina and Mitrass happened in an instant.

Noha appeared next to Oryx at another point in the room and surveyed the scene.

He warned Mitrass.

The latter was not pleased with the order, but also seemed to have no choice but to obey.

"Tsk. I really must be a fun game for you bastards. And if I am, why the hell are you dodging? Do you think you can't take a few hits from me? I only have six metamorphoses!"

"...Don't talk nonsense. No one of that level could even attempt to deflect my attack."

"Excuses! Take my blow head-on if you're a man."

"Senseless provocations..."

As she spoke and provoked him, Seraphina remained extremely alert.

Now she could not gauge Mitrass's level of mobility.

Luckily, the other two didn't seem to intervene not to mention that Mitrass was limited: he couldn't kill her. Still, that didn't make the situation any easier.

The difference was overwhelming. Even with that advantage, facing Mitrass would not be easy.

'Qetesh, you're going to cooperate, right? This is serious.'

[[In situations like this I have to comply, even if I don't want to.]]

'right'

Seraphina analyzed him in the blink of an eye.

his strength was irrefutable; she had already tasted it and understood it.

She could not afford to take even a single direct hit or the consequences would be catastrophic.

Luckily, it worked in her favor that Mitrass could not kill her.

But that didn't make her situation any less precarious.

At that moment, Mitrass took a step forward.

his physical frame and strength made the weight felt immediately; the room shook.

His presence was not an easy thing to bear. In an instant, even with her enhanced perception, Seraphina could barely grasp how Mitrass was already approaching her.

She reacted immediately.

She flexed her legs and leaned back, dodging the attack.

Seraphina was not going to hold back or play solely on the ground where Mitrass was superior. Without warning or warning, the darkness began to move from her feet and advanced directly towards Mitrass.

They were dark vines emerged from the ground and curled around Mitrass' legs, clinging tenaciously.

"...simple tricks."

He didn't care.

He took another step forward and the vines began to snap almost as if they were made of paper.

"Vitis Tenebris Spinae."

Seraphina's voice echoed, and the vines responded.

The darkness thickened and they came more alive. Black thorns sprouted from them, seeking to pierce armor and flesh.

"They're still tricks that-"

Crack!

Mitrass paused.

His armor was tough enough to ignore any attack below the power of ten metamorphosis, but this time he clearly heard the crack.

It was no trick.

It was true that the vines didn't hurt him, but mithras didn't stop because his armor creaked, he was forced to stop.

Seraphina was using a magical branch born from the fusion of darkness and plants: her most powerful affinities, reinforced with affinity for runes and a large portion of her mana.

Mitrass looked up.

He saw Seraphina who had taken some distance aiming her golden spear at him while whispering at high speed.

His skin prickled.

"Lumen quod tenebras frangit et viam purificat... Radius Caelestis."

The threat materialized even before he could fully process it.

His instinct screamed at him that he could not allow that to hit him head on.

But the flash was already there.

The thorns could not harm him directly, but it would take him more than a second to break free. And that second was decisive.

But he didn't let things happen so easily.

Still restrained, a crimson fire ignited in his arms. He forced the movement and barely managed to place his sword in front of him.

Broom!

Just in time to parry the attack capable of altering the course of the combat.

The beam of light impacted against the sword and forced it back even when it was held so tightly, the attack was no joke.

The power was such that Mitrass came to think that, if only he were as strong as his rank indicated, he would have lost senselessly against Seraphina.

"This is nothing, I-"

He was doing his best to resist. He was feeling overwhelmed, but he was confident that he could repel it. He just had to activate his repulsion Skill and-

"Radius Caelestis."

Before he could do so, Seraphina appeared from a direct angle at his side, carrying on the tip of her spear the same dangerous spell.

This time, Mitrass was unable to react.

The beam of light pierced fiercely through his side.

Plack!

He felt the rupture of one of his defensive devices. Still, the attack didn't stop and hit his armor full on. He gritted his teeth.

Everything was happening too fast.

His rank should give him more clarity, more room to think, decide and act... but Seraphina was no slouch.

It was absurd and incomprehensible that someone from the sixth metamorphosis was causing her so much trouble, it didn't make sense.

By that time, Mitrass understood something with absolute clarity:

Even if he activated his ability immediately and managed to deflect the first beam, the second one would have already hit .

Tukss!.

Trusting in his armor and in himself, Mitrass managed to control himself and deflected the first beam of light; even so, the second impact shattered part of his red gold armor and left him with a charred wound.

"Ugh... I won't let you-!"

He quickly rejoined, ignoring the pain, and saw how Seraphina was already preparing more spells.

He couldn't allow it.

He injected a large amount of mana into his boots and rushed towards her at high speed.

Clang!!

Weapons clashed. Mitrass sought to interrupt her spells and stay on top of her. Seraphina took advantage of the impact to propel herself backwards, using the collision to her advantage as she tried to regain distance.

Therein lay her greatest chances.

But Mitrass followed her relentlessly, leaving her no room to flee.

As he advanced, he thought that, had it not been for his Tyrannical body - which made him much more resilient and stronger against attacks - he would have been much more seriously injured.

That exchange puzzled him.

He could not understand how Seraphina was able to cast effective magic against him over and over again, and of different elements to boot.

He had been cautious before, mainly because he felt she might be hiding dangerous tricks; so he thought it best to eliminate her as soon as possible.

He had not expected her to be so proficient in personal combat.

He could only sense her aura, and didn't have a skill like Noha's, but still the combat made it clear: The aura Seraphina emitted corresponded to someone of the sixth metamorphosis.

Even the recent attack felt like genuine power of that rank, but concentrated, as if several mages of the same rank were casting a joint spell at the same time.

'What kind of skill is it, a blessing, what is its effect, does it also have a grace, what god does it belong to?'

As he stopped her from fleeing, Mitrass analyzed her quickly, trying to understand the origin of that unsettling power.

He thought that she must possess skill or blessings that greatly amplified her power, especially her light magic. He also considered that her spear functioned as a staff.

And he was right.

Although Seraphina's affinity for light was only A-ranked, her spear acted as a catalyst of the highest level by possessing Ex affinity for that element.

Moreover, she had taken the time to empower it through chanting and affinity for runes, making every light spell pose a real danger to Mitrass.

"Vitis Tenebris Spinae."

As he tried to back away from Mitrass Seraphina tried to repeat her earlier tactic, but he didn't fall for the same trick twice. He made sure not to get caught between the vines.

And, above all, he didn't allow her to walk away.

He forced combat at close range. His greatsword began to move masterfully, attacking relentlessly, looking for an opening to quickly end this anomalous confrontation.

Unfortunately, he could not use his full strength.

He feared killing her instantly.

CLANG!

"Ugh... damn... your punches are heavy."

"You... who are you? I've never heard of someone like you. Where do you come from?"

Mitrass knew that, if he could exert his full power, the fight would be over by now. The problem was finding the exact point where he could incapacitate her without killing her.

Seraphina had already proven herself to be an extremely strong mage; it was likely that she was holding out thanks to physical reinforcement spells, and those always took a heavy toll later.

He didn't know when that support would fail... or if it would inadvertently end up killing her.

Fighting with that limitation was not easy.

And he had already paid the price in blood.

Frustration began to build up inside him, and he couldn't help complaining about her presence there.

"What's it to you, fucker? What, are you pissed off about the situation? Well let me tell you, there's nobody more pissed off about it than me. I still don't understand what the fuck you three assholes are doing together."