

VILLAIN 60

Chapter 60 The Holy Church (2)

Seated upon his throne, Emperor Maekar was lost in thought.

He was the fourth emperor, the direct descendant of the hero who had sealed the Gates centuries ago.

And yet—despite his lineage—he was on the verge of becoming the worst ruler in history.

He had already lost his wife.

And nearly lost his daughter.

How could he protect an empire... when he couldn't even protect his own family?

Declaring war was easy. But the consequences...

If he followed through, he would be dragging his generation and the next into a conflict with no guarantee of victory.

Even with the empire teetering on the edge of disaster, he couldn't bring himself to make the final decision.

Then—

The air tensed.

A surge of powerful auras approached from the distance.

And in that moment—

A calm, chilling voice echoed through the chamber.

"Everything has slipped from your grasp, Maekar."

A large group entered, led by three elderly figures, each with vastly different builds.

The one in the center wore a pristine white robe, his beard and hair as pale as fresh snow. His aged features exuded a false serenity—completely at odds with his true nature.

Behind them followed a procession of men and women, all clad in white.

Carmen let out a low whistle.

"Oh? Looks like they've come out in full force."

A chuckle slipped from her lips.

For centuries, the empire had been ruled by two major powers.

The Imperial Family and the Four Great Houses.

But the second power...

The Church.

Maekar's expression darkened.

For the first time in decades, all three High Bishops had arrived together.

At the forefront—

Joseph Blatter. An SS-Class Awakened, known as the Apostle of the God's.

To his right—

A towering old man with a scarred, muscular frame. His right eye was missing, replaced by a deep, jagged wound.

Ramiel Callistes. High Bishop of the Church, Envoy of the Lords of Chaos.

SS-Class.

And to the left—

A figure cloaked in solid black, hood drawn low over his face.

Michael Platini. High Bishop of the Church, leader of the Execution Division.

SS-Class.

The Church rarely involved itself in political affairs.

But today... things were different.

Maekar's voice was cold.

"Blatter . What is the meaning of this?"

But against his glare, Blatter remained utterly composed.

"That should be my question, Maekar."

His voice carried a strange, soothing cadence—one that made people instinctively lower their guard.

"Look at the empire's state. We let you rule as you pleased because you were the descendant of the hero—the one chosen by the God's themselves."

His tone softened.

"But tell me, Maekar... where has that led us?"

A pause.

Then—

"It has led us... to our ruin."

Maekar's expression twisted. Lightning crackled around him as he shattered his throne, appearing before Blatter in a flash.

"So that's why you came here, old man?"

Blatter only chuckled.

Then, lifting his hands—

"Look around you, Maekar."

His voice was almost gentle.

"Tell me... what do you see?"

At that moment, the very earth trembled as a massive crowd advanced toward the palace. Their voices, which had been eerily silent just moments before, suddenly erupted in unison, as if they had been forcibly muted and then unleashed all at once.

No one understood how they had arrived so suddenly, but now, the grand imperial palace was surrounded by tens of thousands of people.

And they all chanted with a single voice:

"Enact the will of the Lord!"

Reality was relentless in its cruelty toward Emperor Maekar, as misfortunes continued to rain upon him.

Ignoring Maekar entirely, Blatter strode forward, cutting a path straight to the center of the royal hall.

Some of the royal guards, led by their commander, Oliver Khan, prepared to intervene. Khan himself was poised to strike, but the combined oppressive force of both Ramiel Calestis and Michael Platini halted him in his tracks.

"Stand down, Khan. Do not make a move now."

Khan heard Maekar's voice echo inside his mind. As an SS-rank Awakened, Oliver Khan was in no way inferior to his adversaries, but Maekar understood all too well—any action taken now would be disastrous.

"My lord... this is a blatant violation of your sovereignty!"

"Khan, do not make me repeat myself."

Reluctantly, Khan withdrew, though his expression remained rigid with suppressed fury.

"As you command."

From the moment he entered, Blatter had not so much as glanced at the unfolding events around him. He merely stood there, bathed in a holy light.

"A good performance is about to begin."

Carmen murmured under her breath.

And as if in response to her anticipation, Blatier extended his arms wide.

"O faithful servants of the Lord of Light, behold what we have become."

His words resonated throughout the grand hall and beyond, carrying even to those outside the palace walls.

"We have arrived at this dire moment because the people strayed from the will of the Lord. They drowned in their own desires, forsaking the sacred commandments and the legacy of our ancestors!"

"Three hundred years ago, the great hero—Kazis Valeryon—took up his sacred sword and led all of humanity to a glorious victory!"

Watching from above, Carmen couldn't help but smirk.

"He certainly loves theatrics."

The radiance surrounding Blatter intensified.

"After we claimed our triumph, when our champions sealed the gates and we should have drawn closer than ever to the Lord of Light, instead—heretics arose! They abandoned their faith and turned away!"

"Death to the heretics!"

The voices of tens of thousands roared as one, shaking the very foundations of the city.

"Death to the heretics!"

"Death to the heretics!"

Their chant was a singular, deafening wave of devotion, yet they fell into complete silence at a mere gesture from Blatter. His control over the masses was absolute.

Maekar felt a storm raging within him.

"Blatter... where exactly are you going with this? What is it that you want?"

"What do I want?"

Blatter responded with a question of his own.

"My will... is the will of the Lord. The will of the Lord of Light."

Then, he raised his hand and proclaimed with unwavering conviction—

"And the Lord... wills war!"

"War!"

"War!"

The sky itself seemed to tremble as the people erupted into frenzied cries.

"Would you look at that?"

Carmen chuckled.

As the chants echoed, the church choir began to sing, and soon, radiant halos materialized behind them.

Then, emerging from the light—came celestial beings with eight wings spread wide.

"An angel!"

Someone shouted, and the fervor of the crowd intensified.

"The Lord of Light answers our call!"

Amid the madness, Maekar's expression darkened further.

At that moment, Blatter raised his hand and pointed directly at him.

"We shall revive the legend of the One Sword! The Lord declares that war is the answer! From this day forth, we will begin preparations for battle!"

"And to do so, we need the new One Sword—the hero who will lead the coming war! That is why I demand this of you, Maekar Valeryon... hand over the sacred sword, Vermithor, and devote your heart to serving the Lord of Light!"

Maekar could no longer contain his fury. A deafening thunderclap shook the heavens as a destructive bolt of lightning tore through the palace, shattering its very foundations. The raw power of an SS+ Awakened erupted forth.

"Blatter! The sacred sword Vermithor is the symbol of House Valeryon! And now, you demand I simply surrender it to you?!"

The pressure in the air grew heavier with every word, but Blatter remained unfazed.

"A symbol of your house? Don't make me laugh."

Holy radiance engulfed the hall as Maekar found himself completely surrounded—by both the forces of the church and the countless zealots gathered outside.

"The sacred sword Vermithor is a divine gift from the Lord of Light—a beacon meant to be wielded by the chosen hero, the one who will deliver this world from darkness. It was never yours to claim."

Maekar felt himself sinking. Any move he made now would turn the tide against him.

"From this moment forward, no matter how long it takes, we shall prepare for total war against the demon-worshippers. Whether it takes a day, a month, or a year—this war will not cease, for the Lord stands with us!"

"We will cleanse this land! Until the chosen hero arises, we shall continue our preparations! We shall not waver! We shall not falter! We shall fight... until every last heretic is purged!"

"This is the will of the Lord of Light!"

"The will of the Lord!"

"The will of the Lord!"

"The will of the Lord!"

Amidst the frenzy, from the ruins of the imperial palace, the beginning of a war was declared—a war that would rage for years to come.

A war that would engulf entire generations.

A war whose consequences no one could yet fathom.

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Far from the madness, within a secluded temple, a young man spent his days indifferent to the chaos unfolding beyond.

His only concern was finding a way back to his world and clearing the suspicions surrounding him.