

Darkness 141

Chapter 141: The New Additions

Kahn's command activated the King of the Dead skill which let him create subordinates without even having to touch them.

After an upgrade in his Rank, this ability also had an increase in its range and now he could directly create subordinates within one kilometer radius from him.

There were over 600 bodies from both sides and the majority consisted of Master Rank fighters from different classes.

Kahn waited for the exact reason for each sides to kill themselves off first so he could easily kill the remaining people even through he didn't have any enmity with Demi-Human faction people. Plus saving Szayel would help him for the long term in his opinion.

Although most of them were beginners at best, still the variety of different classes gave Kahn a big boost in the number of strong subordinates. He would've never found these many master-rank corpses together in the same place at Flavot city.

The forces both these sides belonged to weren't short on manpower and definitely were not lacking strong people if they could send these many strong fighters just for a small ambush.

Even a Peak Grandmaster Rank warrior like the red wolfkin who would be treated as one of the strongest people in the Flavot city was nothing but a leader of this small troop of a hit squad.

This gave Kahn a hint about what he should expect after reaching the capital. Because even top figures of the city he left behind were just errand boys for the forces that resided in the capital of the empire.

Luckily he hadn't become an enemy of either of them.

The next second, Ronin who was hiding in the trees all this time came out and released a bit of his aura to warn the monsters to not interfere with the Synthesis procedure.

Although Kahn had fought various monsters and humanoid beings during his journey towards the capital, he couldn't absorb their abilities or create subordinates because there were always too many eyes on him; Let it be the guards or the fellow passengers.. He didn't get a proper time to create new subordinates.

He didn't even get a chance to upgrade Jugram & Oliver who had already been resurrected a couple of days ago by merging them with the Giantsword user like the Demonkin clan head and Bartholomew who was also an Archer.

So this opportunity resulted in good fortune to him because these people were all top rank fighters and possessed many skills of their own and the results would easily be stronger subordinates. And given the number of bodies available, Kahn estimated the numbers to be more than three hundred subordinates after mixing different and suitable classes together and the new members of The Legion would be far stronger and more useful than the previous members of weak and low-level monsters he previously made.

While the Synthesis procedure would continue, he would travel slowly with the Vampire heir and meet the new members later in the dark of the night. He left Ronin here for the very reason to guide them in case his reach was far away to mentally command them.

Kahn and Szayel started walking amongst the dense trees and rocks carefully to cross the side and reach towards the caravan.

"Remember, don't tell anyone about who you are. Say that you were attacked by a bunch of bandits on the other side and I saved you from them. Do you understand?" spoke Kahn.

"I understand. I shall not reveal my identity." replied Szayel.

Kahn took out a black cloak from his space ring and gave it to the vampire boy. Because his attire was simply too eye-catching and one would instantly link him to some nobility class as soon as they saw him.

"Sir, may I ask who you are? I mean a semi-saint rank swordsman such as yourself at this age is very rare, even in the capital." asked Szayel curiously.

"Don't ask about my background unless you have a pretty woman you want to introduce to me." replied Kahn with an emotionless expression.

"Besides, who the hell are you kid? All I heard them say was you were the son of some clan or a faction's leader. And they wanted to kill you to flame war between their enemies." he questioned after just telling the Vampire heir to not question his background.

"I am named Szayel Mor Vandereich, son of Ismatrazel Mor Vandereich. Our clan is one of the three strongest clans in the entire Empire. And also the leading clan of the Pureblood Faction in the capital." replied Szayel pridefully.

"Fuck! So I just got tangled between the faction war of Purebloods, Demi-Humans & The Neutral faction?" cursed Kahn.

As per his information from the history of the empire.. Ever since the Imperial family was overthrown, the newly created government went from Monarchy to Feudalism.

The clans that once served the Imperial family now had the hold of the empire and were in charge of the Empire.

Although there was no true leader of the empire anymore. These noble factions came to a mutual agreement and ran different sectors of the government. But all the major decisions were taken by the parliament that was full of these noble clans and factions officials.

Kahn wondered how this setting hadn't turned to Anarchy because there wasn't even a President or Prime Minister in control. Rather these clans worked as part of the government in the name.

More like an Oligarchy running the entire Empire in the name of managing the people.

But after a decade or two, three different factions came to be.

One of them was the Purebloods Faction consisting of nearly 300 clans that believed in only keeping the sanctity of their species and bloodlines regardless of which species you belonged to and became a force that opposes the interspecies mixture. They were in a way, a band of extremists.

But the Demi-Human Faction wasn't any better either. The only difference was they had done it for the case of different Demi-Humans and opposed the Purebloods.

The Neutral faction was the one who truly believed in Equality for all the races and citizens of the empire rather than partitioning it.

And since all these factions were equally matched in every aspect, there hadn't been a single coup or a civil war in the past hundred years. And that time was enough to remove the annals of history along with the customs and old rules set by the Imperial family.

Kahn sighed after this realization. Because he saw a foreboding of getting mixed into an unnecessary faction war. For now, he would see if there was any benefit of helping the vampire heir like getting some good reward or creating connections that would help him in the Empire.

After reaching the caravan, Kahn explained his well-crafted story for Szayel and they departed for the capital again.

Little did Kahn know that soon, a whole new world was going to be revealed to him.

Chapter 142: The Capital

Four days later, Kahn and the Caravan finally came closer to the outer areas of the capital.

During their travels, Szayel told him a lot about his background which made Kahn feel happy about his choice to save the heir of the Vandereich clan.

The reason why Szayel was ambushed was because currently, their faction held the most positions in the Finance Ministry and under the order of his father, he was to be sent on a secret visit to backtrack a money-laundering scam that could potentially reveal many government officials; and their corrupt businesses done by misusing their power & authority.

Although the Rakos Empire was under an Oligarchy in the past hundred years, it wasn't about oppressing people and using fear to rule. In a way, the three factions kept each other on their tiptoes before any of them tried to misuse their power or take over the empire.

The citizens weren't persecuted, ostracized or shunned in any way just because they belonged to a particular race or a species.

Even for humans, Kahn had seen plenty of black, brown, white & even some yellow-colored skin tone people. The thing called Racism hadn't fucked up this empire at least.

And to his delight, misogynistic practices or misconceptions of society were non-existent. Women were not looked down on just because they were... women. Every part of the society had a place for them as long as one was capable.

Everyone was treated equally under the law.

Although there were some factions and extremist groups who still carried these beliefs such as the supremacy of one race over another, treated those below their standings as slaves or biased beliefs against particular skin color. The vast majority completely overshadowed them.

Based on the information Kahn heard from Szayel & Albestros, many reformations happened to this empire, many wars and coups were done in the past one thousand years ever since this empire came to be. Many things such as slavery system and segregation against a particular race or species had resulted in many civil wars and caused too much bloodshed over the millennium.

And hence, when the Imperial family was overthrown, all the clans that lived to see through the day from the old eras reached a combined consensus to create new laws.

Although they weren't perfect, the power of the people hadn't been taken away in the name of maintaining law & order by ruling authorities. Even though the majority of government sectors were run by noble factions, there was no rule that a commoner wasn't allowed to aim for top positions. As long as they had the capabilities, no one could hinder their growth.

Unlike many Isekai worlds, education was an institution available to every citizen and part of society.

Even the Noble clans who ran amok in a place like Flavot city wouldn't dare to get noticed by the people living in the capital. Because the public alone would force the government to take action instantly.

In his case, Kahn felt lucky because Rakos Empire wasn't under a Theocracy. Otherwise, he'd be hunted down by the cults and churches of the other Gods & Goddesses they served as soon as he arrived in this world. God of Darkness had indeed sent him to the best location available that'd help him grow.

From Albestros, he learned that the capital itself was nearly 53 times bigger than Flavot city and the way of lifestyle was like a difference between the ground and the sky.

When Kahn and the company finally reached 10 kilometers away from the main entrance gates, he stood on a hillside road and was gobsmacked..

"This is a capital? Why don't they call it a state itself?" asked Kahn in a bewildered tone.

From where he stood, Kahn could see nearly 40 of different roads going towards the entrances of the gate. A single gate itself was two kilometers broad and more than a few thousand guards managed the entrance at different bisections. At this moment, he could see at least 50 thousand people comprised of different races and physical appearances going inside and outside of the main gates. Dozens gigantic magical cannons that were even bigger than Rudra were mounted on the 500 meters tall wall that felt like they touched the sky..

"What are these supposed to protect you from? Titans?" he asked himself. These walls even put Wall Maria to shame. Even Colossal Titan wouldn't dare to appear close to these magical and metallic cannons that seemed to have the capacity to obliterate an entire big mountain with a single shot.

Above the gates, he saw the gigantic words introducing the name of the capital.. Rathna.

Named after the first emperor, Rathnaar.

What bewildered him more were the magical ships flying in the air as if some starship suddenly came from Outerspace, the only difference was they were made from wood and different metal alloys. Some even had the capacity of carrying over a thousand people at once.

And there were also dozens of railway tracks that entered the capital with their own routes apart from the gates. The magic trains that entered the separate burrows had engines that ran on magic cores and were made to transport over two thousand people at once. And that too regardless of their size and shapes.

And a flock of giant flying beasts such as Griffons, Manticores and some arctic felines with wings were also part of these traveling groups towards the capital as part of transportation mode. There were airports inside the walls based on where you wanted to land.

This was no longer a standard medieval setting like Kahn had seen in the Flavot city. Rather a completely different and far advanced civilization.

Kahn felt like he suddenly went from living inside Gotham and moved to Wakanda.

"What the hell is up with this disparity? Was I living in a small and remote village?" questioned Kahn.

[This is a completely different setting. As if the Author finally did some research in World Building.] he complained after getting overwhelmed by the new revelation.

And this was just one of the 17 entrances.

"Don't get scared, kid. I know it's a lot to take in. But the amount of resources such as magic cores the capital has is in abundance. They are basically used for everything here. And the commerce here is thousands of times bigger compared to our old city. Everyone who sees it for the first time loses their mind; I was no exception." spoke Albestros after watching Kahn's flabbergasted expression.

Kahn quickly changed his continuance to that of understanding instead of staring at the gates like a country bumpkin.

"This.. It is out of my expectations or how I imagined it to be." replied Kahn.

"Ha.. So Sir Kahn has never been to the capital before?" asked Szayel with a smug expression and irked Kahn. He was being looked down upon.

"Brat, do you not want to reach your clan headquarters alive?" asked Kahn as he gave Szayel a deathly stare.

"I mean.. It's just the entrance. There are 87 Districts in the capital altogether. Each of the district is as big as a city itself." spoke Szayel..

[Bloody hell. Does this mean the capital alone is 5 times bigger than New York?] he contemplated.

He felt a sudden foreboding of doom. Because this was just the entrance. What awaited him inside the walls would blow his mind away.

Based on his calculations.. The capital itself was at least 2700 kilometers long.

[And if this is just the capital, how big is Rakos Empire altogether? If that's just one empire.. Then what about the other 14 empires?] Kahn's brain short-circuited and he sat on his seat.

"Hey.. What's the total population number?" he asked the vampire heir.

"Close to hundred and ten million, give or take." replied Szayel solemnly as if it was a common thing to know.

"What the fuck?! How many people does your clan have then? I'm not talking about the entire faction." questioned Kahn.

"Our Vandereich clan has around 5 million members. And one million are trained fighters. Why do you ask?"

"You gotta be kidding me. If that's the case, then why were you escorted by only 300 warriors? Your envoy should've consisted of at least 10 thousand people. And why were you using carriages? You could've hired one of these flying ships." rebuked Kahn as he found the information simply illogical.

"I was on a secret mission, sir. And contrary to what you may believe, not everyone can use magic; let alone invoke a fighting class. And out of one million, there are barely 100 people who can reach the rank of a Grandmaster Rank in their lifetimes. And lesser numbers for Saint Rank fighters. Even my Grandfather is only a 7th stage Saint. And he's one of the 3 strongest people in the entire empire.

The only person who ever reached the Peak Saint Rank in the past millennia in this empire was the first emperor, Rathnaar the Conqueror.

Someone like you who reached Semi-Saint Rank at such a young age is one in millions. Even my father reached the same rank when he was fifty. And now he's a 4th stage Saint Rank warrior after living for a hundred and fifty year, currently he holds the position as the leader of our clan." clarified Szayel.

"Wait.. Then how old are you?" asked Kahn curiously..

"58 years.. Sadly I'm only a Peak Master Rank Magician." revealed Szayel in an embarrassed tone.

Kahn was rooted on the spot again. This was a lot to take in. The one he was calling a brat was old enough to be his father..

And if this Szayel was right.. Then the first Emperor was someone who could destroy a thousand kilometer area just with his single attack. And he was only a Peak Saint Rank.

Kahn didn't dare to imagine what a Demi-God could do based on these superficial standards.

He cursed in his mind and spoke to himself.

Chapter 143: Reaching the Destination

Kahn entered the gates of the capital after going through proper inspection and had to turn in his weapons until a thorough inspection was done. His Adventurer ID card proved useful in letting him pass through the gates since only fighter class people who were either Adventurers or soldiers under the government were allowed to carry weapons inside the Rathna.

But it didn't mean he could use it on someone. He'd be caught and then jailed if he caused a fight anywhere.

"So, how do we reach your clan without alerting your enemies?" asked Kahn.

"Some of our members also work in transportation businesses. As soon as I reveal my identity, they'll take us directly to the clan headquarters." replied Szayel.

"Don't be stupid, whoever from your clan wants you dead is definitely an influential figure & holds a lot of authority. If any of these people turn out to be serving them instead, we'll die before we even reach halfway." spoke Kahn.

"Then what do you propose, sir Kahn?" asked the vampire heir.

"We take our time. Since they're already aware that you're still alive after not receiving a word from the assassins, they'll be expecting you.

And probably has spread a word about you to their spies & the information network. So we should avoid any contact with someone from your clan. Let's travel like normal people and appear when there are hundreds of witnesses.

So no one can openly attack you or try to silence you in a narrow alley. Do you get it?" explained Kahn.

"I see. That is indeed a reasonable approach. Besides, our headquarters is situated in the innermost parts of Rathna, we will require half a day even with the fastest transportations like a flying ship." spoke Szayel.

Although Kahn sounded like someone who has foreseen the possible outcomes, what he wanted to do in reality was to stall for time.

What he needed first was accurate and documented information about the capital first. He hadn't forgotten about learning the basics of going to a new place.

You first gather information about social structure, ruling authorities, demographics and population propaganda before making big moves. Because lack of information always makes you prone to invite trouble.

So rather than going quickly to the clan headquarters, the trio decided to take a detour. To let the enemies in shadow think that Szayel probably met some ill fate or didn't survive.

Because unbeknownst to the two, Kahn hadn't left a single body or a weapon on the battlefield where he killed the attackers.

So they'd have a hard time deciding whether the vampire heir was dead or not.

Meanwhile, he would visit the central library and gather enough information about the capital, how it was distributed and what places were best to live and do commerce. Because he knew he'd have to spend a lot of time in the capital before he could actually gain enough strength. Maybe it'd even take him a year or two before he broke through the Saint Rank.

Because higher the levels, the more resources were needed. But because of Divine Abilities, he would be spared decades just to reach the Saint Rank Stage 1. All he lacked were the resources. And since there were no dungeons available here and the flow of resources and materials came throughout the empire, he had to look for better and more effective ways.

During his travels, Kahn saw some new species along the way. Szayel, who was more informed about the capital, acted as his guide.

Some of the creatures Kahn saw originated from the different parts of the empire; the capital was a common hub for them to mix so he was introduced to new species he hadn't seen or heard of before.

Thralls were in a way, the amalgamation of Wraiths and Humans with the ability to turn into a ghost-like creature that could do things in the form of smoke. Their completely dark blue skin gave them a similar appearance to the Nightcrawler from X-men.

Botirs were like walking talking humanoid creatures but bodies made with bone-like exoskeletons and had multiple feet like a spikey legged spider demon you usually see in the dungeons.

Mithrans were categorized as species that were most effective in communication because the member of this species didn't even have eyes or ears but they could talk with others telepathically even from 1 kilometer away and had the most accurate sensing abilities. Although their build was humanoid, Kahn was reminded of those Xenomorphs from the Alien movie franchise.

Yetvir were creatures that could transform into monstrous beasts at will and take human form when they found it convenient. The only downside was their clothes were always torn down during the transformation.

But what surprised him the most were the Yokai like creatures Kahn often saw in Japanese culture mangas and animes.

Tengu, foxtails and creatures he didn't even know the names of. He felt like watching InuYasha and Nura : Rise of the Yokai Clan again.

After spending 2 hours traveling using the mana trains and various flying beasts, they finally reached the central library.

And he spent a day reading there.

The next day, he finally told Albestros & Szayel that it was about time they left for the headquarters.

Kahn experienced how it felt to travel in a flying ship. It was even faster than a plane and in just few hours, They reached the innermost areas of the capital where the most influential clans of the empire resided.

After walking 2 hours on foot and avoiding the many gazes of people who were on the lookout for Szayel, who were sensed by Kahn's Survival Instinct & Hunter's Intent, the trio finally stood in front of a vast land that felt like a fief on its own. The headquarters of the Vandereich clan alone felt like a town in itself.

"You ready?" asked Kahn to Szayel. He knew something was going to happen as soon as they appeared in front of the main gates of their headquarters. So he had to be prepared for a clash and get Szayel to the ruling members of the clan before anybody could inform about their arrival to the people inside.

To his question, Szayel replied with a stern expression.

"Yes.. Let's see who wants me dead."

Chapter 144: The Vandereich Clan

Kahn & the company covertly traveled inside the innermost estates of the capital, avoiding the spies of not just the Vandereich clan but also the ones from the other factions as if they were waiting for Szayel to show up.

If not for his heightened senses, skills and him being a Semi-Saint Rank; he wouldn't have managed to walk the paths unnoticed.

Unlike the outer layers of the capital, the inner area consisted only of 500 Kilometers radius where over a hundred top clans had occupied the territory. Each of them owning large lands and houses. This was the area where only the top 1% resided.

Even their trio had to spend half a day just to venture inside from various vehicles and routes to not get noticed. Whoever planned to have Szayel killed, had people in every place.

"Kid.. Is it okay for me to be here? If it comes to a fight, I can't be of any help." said Albestros.

"Don't worry. We're not going in like thieves." spoke Kahn and took 2 mana bombs out of his space ring.

"Are you out of your mind? How is this not acting like an enemy instead?" retorted the grandmaster blacksmith.

"We want witnesses and there's no better way to alarm the top decision-makers with a good old-fashioned explosion." smirked Kahn.

"I agree. We might get attacked or stopped before anyone from the main family knows we're here. If we can garner all the attention to ourselves, even those who are siding with my enemies won't be able to publicly attack me." spoke Szayel.

"You two will stay hidden, I'll wreak havoc in the inner areas and gather all the attention myself. Szayel, you'll use the invisibility spells and artifacts to reach the main estate. You can manage at least that much, right?" spoke Kahn.

The Vampire heir nodded and affirmed.

After their trio reached the borders of their main estates, there were still over two hundred houses and nearly four thousand residents that were either part of the main security forces or did the servant work.

The reason why Kahn wanted to be the distraction was that the two people with him weren't fast enough to survive on their own had they been surrounded by the thousands of top-rank soldiers. So only he was fit to cause mayhem that would instantly get noticed by the top members of the Vandereich clan.

Besides, only he was capable enough to infiltrate without raising an alarm and reach the central streets close to the main estate.

When they finally reached roads that led to the clan headquarters, they separated and headed in different directions as planned.

Kahn who was at semi-saint rank won't have any trouble defeating the guards at fortress-like walls of the clan headquarters but what he wanted to do was create a distraction first so the duo of Szayel & Albestros can easily get inside.

Kahn's figure appeared on the main road that led towards the main gates that were guarded by nearly four hundred guards clad in white and golden patterned armors and had the sigil of the Vandereich clan, a red sword on a shield.

"Hey, you! Who are you?!" spoke one of the guards when Kahn's figure suddenly appeared in front of the gates out of nowhere.

But instead of replying, the man clad in black adventurer attire and a greatsword on his back swiftly ran past them before any of them could even react. Although the vampire had twice the reflex speed and senses, he was simply too fast for them to stop him.

"Intruder! Everyone on alert!" shouted and the hundreds of guards quickly started chasing after Kahn.

After crossing a kilometer distance in just a few seconds, he threw a mana bomb in an open space.

BOOOM!!!!

An echoing sound of a ground-shattering explosion suddenly filled the entire surrounding of 5 kilometers and all the residents and security who lived in the proximity of this area were quickly shaken to their core after hearing the explosion.

"Enemy attack!!" shouted the soldiers from the garrison of the guards and in just a few seconds, various sirens rang while tangible barriers came to be and created a 5 kilometer long dome around the area where Kahn was running to.

Kahn gathered all his might and threw two more mana bombs at the dome and the entrance area of the inner settlements and shook the entire place.

BOOM! BOOM!

Explosions after explosions shook the ground and broke the defensive barriers.

Nobody had expected that someone would just barge inside their headquarters and start blowing things up like a madman especially when there were Saint Rank fighters living in the center of their headquarters.

Just in ten minutes after running through various streets and dodging from various mage spells, arrows and attacks from the thousands of soldiers, he reached the entrance of the main estate that looked more like a castle made for the royalty and threw another mana bomb towards the entrance, just far enough that the explosion wouldn't kill any guards or innocent bystanders.

Boom!!

Thousands of soldiers started running towards Kahn's direction and the top-ranking warriors came from inside of the castle.

When the explosion subsided, Kahn walked through the main gate that led to the inter-area of the castle and he stood right in the middle of an open ground surrounded by walls from the 3 sides and hundreds of archers and a cavalry ready to attack him.

Kahn smiled in return after looking at this deterrence force, with no fear in his eyes.

"Halt!!" a loud voice filled the area and a soul-shivering aura was released from the center of this formation of soldiers.

"I don't care who you are. But you've done a grave mistake by attacking the headquarter of our clan. Tell me a reason why we shouldn't kill you?!" a domineering pressure was exerted in the surrounding.. This aura was even twice stronger than Kahn's own aura.

The pressure itself gave a sense of the person's rank..

A First Stage Saint Rank!

An old and muscular vampire with a giant sword and a shield on his back while being clad in intrinsically carved white and golden armor walked from the midst of the thousand soldiers and stood in front of Kahn.

War Dominance!

He quickly activated War Dominance and broke the pressure exerted over his body and instantly nullified the overbearing aura. His own aura was now equally matched with this vampire.

Kahn spoke in a calm and collected tone as he replied..

"Because I have brought you gifts you would thank me for." he said and snapped his fingers.

Snap!

Suddenly, two figures came into everyone's sight and one of them walked towards the vampire warrior. This short figure removed the hood and multiple gasps were heard by the thousands of soldiers that were surrounding them.

And as soon as everyone saw the face of this new intruder, they started kneeling on the ground including the Saint Rank warrior.

"Welcome back, my lord." spoke the warrior.

Szayel spoke in a regal and authoritative tone in response.

"Bring me to Lord Father and inform the elders that I've asked for an emergency meeting."

But the next second, he stopped his words and looked back at Kahn & Albestros with a sinister smile and gave another command.

"And imprison these humans."

Chapter 145: The Main Culprit

Both Kahn & Albestros stood rooted on the spot as soon as Szayel's command reached their ears.

The ally had suddenly turned into a foe.

"What's the meaning of this?" asked Kahn as he released his killing intent aimed at Szayel.

"Did you really think I would let all the rude slanders you made to me slide away? You humans are nothing but pests of society, yet you dared to treat me, the son of the noble Vandereich clan, without any respect. Did you think that there won't be any consequences?" spoke Szayel in a mocking tone.

"But, he saved your life!" exclaimed the grandmaster blacksmith standing behind Kahn.

But Szayel acted as if he didn't hear anything.

"Captain Livaan, put both these men in our prison. I will come to see through their punishment myself after talking with father & the elders." ordered Szayel and walked towards the main hall of the castle.

At this moment, although Kahn could easily escape using his skills and artifacts, he could only do it for himself. Albestros would be caught in the crossfire.. Something he couldn't afford to do. So for the sake of the old man, Kahn decided to surrender to the soldiers without putting up a resistance.

Ten minutes later, both of them were escorted by the hundreds of soldiers to the underground prison as per the orders of Captain Livaan, the first stage Saint Rank, because they thought Kahn would try to escape or these many people won't be enough to handle him as he was a semi-saint rank swordsman.

They already confiscated Lucifer so there wasn't much he could do as per their assumption.

As soon as both of the humans were put inside the cells, Albestros cursed loudly.

"What the hell is the meaning of this, boy?! Didn't you save that bloodsucker's life? Is he that immature to hold a grudge because you didn't clean his shoes?" spoke the old man in an enraged tone.

But to his surprise, Kahn lazily laid back against the wall and sat down with a carefree attitude. He looked at the old man and gave a light smirk.

"The future is now, old man." he said and chuckled.

"It's part of my plan."

"What do you mean?" asked Albestros.

"We already discussed that he'd put both of us in a safe location first before he tells his family about the ambush. And till then, no one should look for trouble with us. And if they do.. Well, then they're part of the traitor gang who would try to silence us." he explained.

"Then why didn't you tell me this? Do you know how scared I was?" spoke the old man.

"And that's exactly why we did so. I'm really good at acting.. But we needed a genuine expression from you as well. Don't worry, if anything happens, I'll protect you." replied Kahn.

"How? You don't even have a weapon. And I don't see any space ring on you, either."

"About that.."

A black figure suddenly appeared out of his shadow and stood in the middle of the cell.

"What the.. Where did he come from?" asked the old man after he looked at the handsome man clad in black attire who had green eyes.

Ronin knelt in front of Kahn and took out 4 space rings.

"Did you bring it?"

"Yes, master." spoke Ronin and took Lucifer out of a space ring after stealing it from the storehouse where the soldiers previously kept it.

He was a High Lord rank subordinate, so it was easy for him to quietly infiltrate inside the storage room because now, Ronin had Kahn's all Assassin skills as well after Kahn unlocked the Impartation Skill with all those subordinates who had 100% loyalty to him.

"He has skills that let him hide in anyone's shadow." explained Kahn how Ronin also infiltrated inside the cell.

"What do we do now?" asked Albestros.

"Now.. We wait."

After waiting for the next four hours, the duo.. The trio inside the cell finally heard multiple footsteps walking in the passage.

Ronin quickly hid in Kahn's shadow as he couldn't reveal him to anyone stronger than them because his aura wasn't of a human but a monster. And since there were far stronger people than him, they could easily tell the difference.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

The group of vampire warriors stood in front of their cell and started unlocking the door.

"Both of you have been summoned." spoke the guard and both the prisoners were escorted out.

However, when they reached one of the entrances towards the main hall of the castle, one by one, two hundred soldiers wearing the clan's armors and various weapons in their hands started surrounding the two prisoners.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Loud footsteps resounded in the area and soon, two figures came out of the troop of the soldiers as they quickly created a pathway.

One of the figures was captain Livaan, the first stage saint rank warrior Kahn had seen before. Behind him, was a white-skinned vampire girl who appeared the same age as Kahn.

Her white skin and red lips along with the long waist-length silver hair paired with the glimmering red eyes gave her the appearance of one of those vampire girls you see in fanarts on the internet. Her calm and cold demeanor gave her a sense of cold and unparalleled beauty.

But the tight and intrinsically patterned silver armor around her body also gave her a touch of a female sword user.

"So, are you the one who saved my little brother?" asked the vampire girl, her melodious voice completely contradicting her warrior-princess appearance.

Kahn however felt a killing intent directed at him the very next second.

"What would happen if I said yes?" he asked back and released some of his aura, instantly giving a warning to the soldiers surrounding him.

"Oh.. I refuse to believe that a human such as yourself can kill more than two hundred trained warriors alone. For all I care, you might as well be a spy sent by our enemies to infiltrate the ranks by appearing as my brother's savior." spoke the vampire girl.

"Oye.. What's with this baseless accusation? What proof do you have? And besides, you all should be thanking me instead of putting me behind a cell. My opinion of your so so-called respectable clan has already hit the rock bottom." retorted Kahn.

"Impudence! How dare you speak back to our lady, Vivian Mor Vandereich without any honorifics; you lowly human!" shouted Livaan in an angered tone and released his murderous aura at Kahn.

Kahn in return activated War Dominance and broke the aura that was surrounding him and Albestros.

"This.." the vampire heiress gasped in surprise.

"So he's indeed a semi-saint rank warrior. And to reach at this level under 30 years.." spoke the girl. But the next second, as if feeling a sense of threat; she commanded the hundreds of soldiers full of swordsmen and knights that were surrounding the two humans.

"Guards! He dared to slander the name of our reputable clan. Kill him!!"

"What the hell is wrong with you people? Is that how you treat those who help the people from your clan?" declared Kahn.

What confused him the most was why these people were adamant about persecuting him instead of showering him with riches.

The next second however, he saw a sneering look with a condescending smile on the girl's face.

[So it's her who wanted Szayel dead.]

Kahn quickly took a defensive artifact out of his space ring and threw it towards the old man.

"I'll handle this. You protect yourself." spoke Kahn and activated the Sword King and Sword Battlemaster skill together. His oppressive and chaotic black & red aura quickly suppressed the hundreds of soldiers. Only those at

His aura reached its peak and multiple mana swords formed around him in a few seconds.

"Yahh!" shouted one of the approaching guards before he could even notice Kahn's aura swords.

But before the soldiers could even come close to Kahn, his left thigh was pierced by one of Kahn's aura blades.

Gasp!

Livaan gasped in surprise after looking at Kahn's skills.

"How.. How is that possible? That's a proper Saint Rank fighter's skill! But he hasn't broken through the saint rank yet!"

"I can get away with it but you won't. So let me deal with this human." spoke Vivian and gave him an understanding look as her eyes turned serious the next second. A malicious intent arose from her as she clenched her hands over the sword on the waist.

Thud! Boom!

One by one, Kahn was beating the hell out of all the attacking guards. He dodged, parried and disarmed all the soldiers one by one. He was so fast that his attacks and kicks in the chest and face would land before the soldiers could even swing their weapons at him.

Although Kahn could easily kill this bunch, he was on someone else's turf. And if he killed the soldiers like he normally does with his enemies, he'd be marked by this clan till his dead body dropped on the ground.

And there was also the first stage saint rank tank warrior there so he had to be careful.

Clang! Shing! Crack!

Dozens of soldiers were stabbed and injured with Kahn's aura blades and their own swords that attacked from various angles from the air.

Slash!

Kahn quickly slashed his sword and blocked a slim rapier aimed at his neck.

"You vermin! You think you'll get out of here alive?" spoke Vivian who tried to make a sudden attack on Kahn's life.

"Why are you so keen on killing me? Did I touch you in a wrong place or something?" he asked with a devilish smirk.

"Stop!!"

A domineering and kingly voice filled the surroundings and an unimaginably heavy aura filled the battlefield.

Both Kahn and Vivian were forced to kneel on the ground.

A tall and slim figure of a vampire suddenly appeared on the battlefield.

"Is this a way to treat our guests?" asked this majestic looking vampire in noble clothes to Vivian who was kneeling on the ground and had a face full of fear.

Kahn on the other hand was extremely surprised. Although this aura didn't have any bloodlust in it.. Even his War Dominance failed to help him overthrow this pressure.

He looked at the mature and regal vampire who stood in between him and Vivian and had his hands folded behind his back.

By Kahn's estimation.. The aura belonged to a Fourth Stage Saint Rank person.

The Vampire stopped releasing his pressure and spoke to Kahn.

"I apologies for the rude welcome, young man. But first, we need to have a private talk."

Chapter 146: The Rewards

Ismatrazel Mor Vandereich, the current head of the Vandereich clan that had nearly 5 million members around the entire Rakos Empire, stood before Kahn in an imposing manner.

He was currently the strongest person Kahn had met so far in this new life. The clan leader who also ranked in the top 15 strongest fighters and was also one of the top 5 swordsmen in the empire just apologized to him on behalf of his clan for the improper welcome.

"Lord Father, this human thoroughly insulted our clan right in front of our hall. He deserves to be killed!" exclaimed Vivian and drew her sword at Kahn again. Her image flickered and a blade was aimed right at Kahn's neck. But before it could even move an inch, it stopped in its way.

A thumb and a forefinger had grabbed the blade in its charge. And the fingers belonged to none other than the clan leader of this vampire clan.

Another burst of horrifying aura was released from the vampire lord but this time, it was filled with killing intent. But surprisingly, it wasn't directed at Kahn but Vivian instead.

The next second, Vivian caved in the stone floor under this pressure and multiple cracks appeared on the solid ground.

"Do you really believe that I will allow you to kill someone in front of me just because you're my daughter?" asked Ismatrazel, his gaze full of contempt towards his own daughter.

Even Kahn wasn't the target of this raged aura felt a chill under his skin from this horrifying pressure.

"Commander! Take them away." ordered the vampire leader and the next second, a vampire mage donned in white and golden mage robes appeared out of nowhere and quickly cast an entrapment spell on both Vivian and captain Livaan who just tried to kill Kahn under a false pretense.

"Lord Father! Why are you taking an outsider's side?" asked Vivian who was now trapped inside this extremely dense and strong mana cell.. Like a bird in a cage.

"Silence!! I will deal with you later."

The noble vampire's gaze then turned towards Kahn and Albestros who stood at the center of the battlefield. He gestured at the mage commander, who released the aura of a 3rd stage saint rank mage himself and the very next second, Kahn and Albestros disappeared from the center along with the vampire clan leader.

Inside a lush green garden where a luxuriously made white tea table with blue patterns carved on it was kept, three figures suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

On one of the seats, was a young and silver-haired vampire sitting as if waiting for someone.

"Allow me to offer you our hospitality." spoke the vampire lord and sat on the main seat.

Several professionally dressed servants that stood on the side started pouring them an aromatic tea in their respective cups.

Without standing on ceremony, Kahn sat at the other end.. Completely unfazed by this sudden grand gesture of friendliness. Albestros on the other hand seemed a bit hesitant.

"No need to worry. You're in no danger." spoke Szayel and gestured to the old man to sit down.

Next, his father spoke.

"My son.. Told me about everything. During the meeting with the inner circle of the clan, he only mentioned how he was ambushed and nearly killed by our enemies to flame a war between us and the neutral faction.

But he did not tell anyone about how one of our own was in cahoots with the enemies. Or how they found out about Szayel's sudden visit as per my orders.

So no one knows about there being a traitor in our family but myself and my son." revealed the vampire without beating around the bush.

"And I assume you already know who that is now." spoke Kahn in a calm and collected manner.

"Yes. To see that my own daughter shook hands with our enemies, just to become my chosen successor. And even planning to kill her stepbrother for it." said Ismatrazel with a disappointed look on his face.

"And I once thought of her as a worthy candidate.. But this is crossing a line. Whatever matters of the family should stay in it. We will deal with it our way. I'll make sure that you won't be targeted."

Suddenly, Kahn interjected as spoke.

"I don't mean to get entangled in your clan affairs, lord clan leader. I didn't even intend to save your son, to be honest. Until I learned of his real Identity and decided to escort him here."

"And why did you do so? You are well aware of how you could've been killed after you made that stunt of blowing up mana bombs in our vicinity." asked the elegant vampire lord.

"Worth the risk if I'm to get rewarded handsomely." replied Kahn and sipped the aromatic tea. The first sip itself gave him a heavenly and blissful feeling.

"Hahaha. I like honesty, young man. Besides, someone like you who reached semi-saint rank at this early age is a rare case. Even I myself didn't believe it when Szayel told me about you. And to create a Saint Rank skill this early.. You're indeed a true genius." praised the clan head.

"I did feel like you were actually someone sent to infiltrate our ranks under the disguise of saving my son at the last moment. But after learning how you used yourself as bait to find the true culprit behind the ambush.. I must say that I'm impressed.

Now tell me.. What do you want as your reward? I could even offer you a suitable rank in our midst given your incredible talent. I myself am a swordsman so I know the amount of hard work and practice you must have put yourself through over a decade to reach this level. So it'd be a waste to let your talent go unnoticed." proposed the clan leader.

[I wonder if he would commit seppoku if I tell him that I did it all in just two months..] thought Kahn.

"Thank you for the offer, my lord. But what I want as a reward transcends far above something like a position or a rank in your prestigious clan." replied Kahn.

His sudden refusal gave all three males a surprise.

"Then what do you want that is far more precious than what I offered you?" asked the vampire lord curiously.

Kahn gave a light smile in return and spoke confidently..

"Your Friendship."

Chapter 147: The Friendship

Silence. A grim silence suddenly filled the merry environment as soon as Kahn made his proposal and asked for their friendship as a form of reward.

However, the Vampire Lord's face turned somber the next second and his aura rose again. Unlike before, this time his aura filled with wrath towards Kahn. Although he didn't release all of it.. Both Szayel and Albestros who were sitting on the sides felt like their soul had left their bodies.

"You.. You shouldn't chew something that you can't stomach. We're not some no-name clan sitting at the bottom of the food chain. Besides.. friendship is done between equals.

And you should know better.. Both friendship and enmity with our clan have their consequences. Consequences that someone like you can't afford." warned the vampire clan leader.

"So are you telling me that your own son's life isn't worth extending your friendship to someone?" asked Kahn.

"Not quite.." replied Szayel's father without a hitch.

"Lord father!.." Szayel interrupted with an expression as if he was betrayed.

"Don't get me wrong, son. You're not well aware of the terms that come with such promises. He isn't just asking for some small gesture of friendliness. But for our backing and use our clan's name.

That is something which shouldn't be taken lightly." explained Ismatrazel to Szayel and looked back at Kahn who was enjoying the fragrant and soul-soothing tea without the slightest hint of fear or awkwardness.

[This brat! He's not even fazed..] he thought.

"You should know that I deal with hundreds of affairs like this on a daily basis. If not for you saving one of my children, no way in seven hells would someone of my stature even share the same table as you." spoke the clan leader.

"Can I be brutally honest, lord clan leader?"

"You may. So speak.."

"You should know how much resources and time people like you and I need to hone our skills. And I have no intention to spend years trying to make a living while working for somebody. I want to be free of these shackles and focus on something worth my time." clarified Kahn.

Unbeknownst to everyone, Kahn didn't actually need any money given his current wealth but he already had plans in his mind to bring in some big amounts of cash. Because soon, the number of resources and money he would require couldn't be just gathered by robbing petty nobles or raiding a dungeon.

At this explanation, even the clan leader felt surprised and perked his ears.

"You.. I assume you have something to offer in exchange. And you have planned this conversation since the beginning. Am I right?" asked the clan leader and leaned on his chair, giving Kahn an understanding gaze.

"What..what are you two talking about?" asked Szayel with a puzzled expression.

"Since when?" asked the vampire lord as he ignored his son's question.

"As soon as I learned about Szayel's background." replied Kahn and shrugged.

"Okay, seriously.. What the hell are you talking about?" interrupted Szayel.

"So what's the big plan? It better be worth my time." spoke Ismatrazel.

Szayel was ignored.. Again.

The next second, Kahn stood up from his seat and did the gesture of pointing both of his palms towards a figure sitting on the table who had been quiet since the very beginning of this conversation.

"Lord clan leader, allow me to introduce you to.. Sir Albestros Winston! The Grandmaster rank Blacksmith of Flavot city!" declared Kahn in a grandiose manner.

"What?!" exclaimed both Ismatrazel & Szayel in shock. Both of their expressions froze as soon as they heard the name. And then they looked at the old man with an unkempt and long white beard.

Not even in their wildest dreams had the father and son duo imagined the mundane looking and disheveled old man to be a Grandmaster rank Blacksmith. The ones who were as rare as a phoenix's feathers.

On the other end, even the old man had a 'NANI?!' expression on his face.

"35%" spoke the vampire clan leader in haste.

"5%" replied Kahn.

"25%"

"10%" replied Kahn and rolled his eyes.

"20%"

"15%"

"Deal!" spoke Szayel's father and stood up to shake Albestros's hands.

"We will be in your care, sir Winston. I heard of your great name many years ago. I hope our relationship stays strong over the course of upcoming years." spoke the vampire lord and shook the old man's hands vehemently.

"What is actually happening?!" shouted Szayel who had no idea what just transpired here.

The grandmaster blacksmith looked at Kahn with an expression of disbelief and betrayal.

"Hey, kid.. Did you just sell me off?"

"Hahaha! In a way.. I did." chuckled Kahn and sat on his chair again after shaking the vampire lord's hand.

"Can somebody please tell me what are you people even talking about?!" raged Szayel.

His father replied to him the next second..

"This is why I haven't made you my successor yet. You can't even infer a business deal from our words.."

"And what this means is that I will soon open a high-end Blacksmith shop under Sir Winston's name. We will do the business and your clan shall provide enough connections from the shadows. In return, we will prioritize all the orders from your clan and also give you a 15% cut of the monthly profits." elaborated Kahn.

This was exactly the unspoken meaning behind their words. Only those who had experience in doing businesses would understand such a short talk. Kahn, who was an accountant in his previous life and Ismatrazel who dealt with his clan's affairs were well versed people at his. Their understanding transcended above the minds of normal people.

"Then speak like normal people, would you?" rebuked Szayel after being reprimanded by his father.

Albestros on the other hand felt like a knife was stabbed in his back. Kahn had taken such an important decision on his behalf without even discussing it with him first. But there was no sense of guilt or shame on the young man's face.

Kahn's smile looked rather.. Sinister. As if some shopkeeper sold a stone at the price of a diamond.

Although the deal was far beneficial to him and the direct friendship with one of the strongest forces in the entire empire would give him ten times the fame and wealth he had before.. He still felt wronged.

Because Kahn did him dirty.

Kahn on the other hand grinned even wider. This was indeed his plan as soon as he learned about Szayel's secret and escorted him to the capital. And that's also why he risked being killed by this clan's soldiers when they tried to infiltrate.

The money he could get as a handsome reward would last him for so long.. But this business pitch and that too with the clan leader of one of the strongest forces in the empire was a one in a million opportunity. And that's why he took such big risks and even brought the old man together with him in the castle.

But before any celebrations could be made.. The vampire clan leader spoke again.

"Before we make formal arrangements.. I want to do something. I hope you agree to my request."

"What is it?" asked Kahn with a confused expression.

To this, the Vampire Lord replied in a calm demeanor.

"Let's have a duel."

Chapter 148: The Duel

Kahn, Szayel and Albestros were out of their wits after this sudden challenge for a duel by the vampire lord.

"What? Why do you want to fight me?" asked Kahn with a bewildered expression.

Just now, their perfect business deal that was beneficial to both sides was agreed upon but suddenly the leader of the Vandereich clan suddenly wanted to clash swords with him.

"You didn't think it'd be that easy, did you?" smirked the vampire.

"And why do you want to fight with me all of a sudden, if I may ask?"

"Isn't it obvious? I want to test your mettle. To see whether you're truly worthy of partnering up with. Otherwise, what's the point if you can't even hold down your fort without our support. I want to see whether you're truly worthy of our.. Friendship." spoke Ismatrazel.

"Fine, I agree. What are the rules? You don't plan to kill me, right?" asked Kahn nonchalantly.

To his attitude, even the 4th stage saint rank swordsman felt a surprise. Normally, people would outright refuse him given his strength.

Little did he know.. That Kahn was an exception to this rule. The more he fought and perfected his skills and combat techniques.. The more proficiency and weapon mastery he'd gain from these encounters thanks to the blessings from the War Deity himself.

"Good then. Follow me." replied the vampire leader.

After walking for ten minutes inside the 4 kilometer long mansion, their group reached a circular underground arena that was filled with hundreds of soldiers training inside. The arena itself was 2 kilometers in circumference and had an open battleground in the middle.

As soon as their group walked inside, all the soldiers that were training with their varying weapons and magic skills stopped their movements and bowed in front of their leader.

"Clear the grounds. I'm going to fight this young man here."

Gasp!

Multiple gasps were heard from the crowd after their leader's declaration. But they quickly abided by his order and left the ground open for these two swordsmen.

After everything was taken care of, Kahn stood on the opposite side and took Lucifer out of his space ring.

"What an amazing sword. I presume sir Winston made it?" inquired the vampire swordsman.

"Yes. He says it's one of his best works to the date." replied Kahn and took a defensive stance.

"No need to be afraid. I will only use my strength at the similar level of a semi-saint fighter like you. And all you have to do is land a decisive attack on me in 10 minutes. You do it and I will give you my full support."

Although, the words from the mighty swordsman were said casually.. Someone like Kahn knew the battle intent behind those words.

His opponent wasn't going to hold back.

Although Kahn's weapon mastery for swords was at peak grandmaster rank.. But to break through the saint rank and increase the rank of his skills such as Sword King & Sword Battlemaster.. He had to perfect his swordsmanship skills to the max. Otherwise, he'd have the strength but no form when he broke through the saint rank.

Because of his Divine Abilities.. It was easier for him to level up but there were no shortcuts when it came to fighting skills. Even with the help of his blessings, he still had to master these skills on his own. Or he will be a turtle without a shell in front of truly seasoned warriors.

To Kahn, it's like hitting a jackpot because he would get a grand opportunity to fight and learn from one of the best swordsmen in the empire.

"Start!" shouted the vampire and Kahn's figure quickly flickered, the very next second, his sword appeared right next to the clan head's left shoulder.

Shing!

Before the tip could even move forward, a sword made of aura appeared out of nowhere and parried against the incoming attack. And to Kahn's surprise, the vampire clan leader hadn't even moved a muscle or felt any impact.

Kahn was fully aware of his strength in that attack, but felt a sense of suppression on his movements. As if that attack he made was not only seen through but a perfect counter was already prepared by the opponent.

Stinger! Water aura blade! Windcutter!

Kahn changed his footwork and started launching his melee and long-range sword attacks on the vampire.

Flick! Flick! Clink!

One by one, his attacks were being parried by the aura swords that always seemed to appear at the last second and divert the direction of the attack.

For the next five minutes, he kept attacking from various angles and even used his Sword King skill to attack the clan leader from fifty-one directions, only to get every single one of his aura swords getting successfully guarded against.

[What the hell.. Is he cheating? What am I missing?] he thought because no way was he holding back.

"My turn!" spoke the vampire swordsman and the next moment, over a hundred small blades albeit shorter and thinner than Kahn's aura swords started attacking Kahn and all the swords from his side.

Kahn sidestepped and used side hopper from time to time and he barely missed getting stabbed.

From each of these swords.. He felt a suppressive aura that was completely different from his own aura swords that contained the pure destructive power behind them. Compared to his own.. The aura blades from Ismatrazel were far more refined, compact and every single one of them had a suppressive force that was infused within them.

In just a minute, Kahn was completely put on a backfoot and was nothing but a coward running away from the onslaught as all he could do was dodge and parry. All his aura swords were being broken in two by the vampire's swords.

The hundreds of soldiers on the other hand were surprised with Kahn's display and control over his body and aura swords. Because from their experience.. Other's couldn't even hold their sword properly in front of their leader, let alone fight on equal ground with him.

[What the hell am I missing?] he asked himself and suddenly.. And enlightenment struck Kahn's mind.

His countenance turned serious and his Survival Instinct reached its peak the next second. The suppressive force that was coming from the opponent's swords suddenly started feeling familiar. Something that he had felt before.

What he did next was something even the fourth stage saint rank swordsman hadn't expected.

Rather than trying to counter the aura swords from the enemy.. Kahn stopped fighting, closed his eyes and quickly grabbed an aura sword that was aimed at his chest with his bare hand.

As if some form of realization had struck him.. Kahn spoke with a smile on his face.

"I see. So that was the reason behind that suppressive force. It's not your aura that these swords are made of.." stopped Kahn in his words and opened his eyes again with a newfound excitement as he spoke again..

"It's the World Energy!"

Chapter 149: The Offer

The Vampire clan leader was rooted on the spot as soon as Kahn grabbed the sword made with World Energy.

[Impossible! How can he sense world energy? He's not even a bonafide saint rank fighter yet.] he thought.

On the other end.. Kahn felt a form of connection towards the suppressive force that was coming out of the sword he just grabbed with his bare hands. But before he could think how the vampire swordsman merged the world energy in his aura swords.. The system that had been dormant for weeks finally gave a notification.

Ding!

[The system detects that the host has made contact with an aura merged with the world energy.

World Energy absorption procedure initiated.

The host is advised to absorb more world energy by making a physical or using the host's aura to establish a connection with world energy.

Current progress : 0.01%] notified the system.

Kahn felt surprised by this sudden revelation but quickly decided to adapt to the situation than wasting time trying to comprehend what just happened. He only had 5 minutes left otherwise the business deal they made wouldn't go the way he wanted and maybe the clan leader would even rethink their previous arrangement.

"More!" spoke Kahn and created new aura swords and attacked the flock of the world energy swords created by the opponent.

He dashed and swung his swords at Ismatrazel, launching his long-range attacks one by one while closing off the distance between them. This was another fortunate encounter.. And he was going to milk it for the best.

The vampire clan leader on the other hand was completely flabbergasted. Because from his personal experience.. Sensing the world energy before breaking through to Saint Rank was nigh impossible. Even the most talented mages or the renowned geniuses that he heard of failed to do so. Yet the no-name swordsman he hadn't ever heard of could sense it and that too in an ongoing fight.

He quickly calmed himself and focused on the ongoing battle. This was the matter of his reputation in the end.

"Fine! Let's see how much you can handle." spoke the vampire and appeared right next to Kahn in a second and for the first time, he used his own hands to attack Kahn.

A white sword with a golden hue made from the combination of both world energy and his own aura formed in the right hand. He aimed at Kahn's right shoulder as he made a piercing attack.

Kahn who was in his peak alertness sensed this threat from Survival Instinct and sidestepped just in time that only his after image was left before the white sword appeared where he was standing half a second ago.

His figure appeared 20 meters away and he quickly took another defensive stance. Meanwhile, in the air, their aura swords were colliding against each other one by one. But unlike before.. It were his swords breaking through the opponent's weapons.

[What! How is he doing that?! It shouldn't be possible!] thought Ismatrazel with a baffled expression on his face. No longer having the calm and collected mind of a seasoned warrior. It was one thing if another Saint Rank fighter did that.. But the one who was doing it right in front of him was just a semi-saint swordsman.

Although he was using strength at the same level.. His aura swords were by no means anything that someone like Kahn should be able to break in half.

[What kind of freak is this human? Not only can he use a Saint Rank Swordsmanship skill just like me.. But he can also sense world energy. Even I wasn't able to do any of these things when I was at his level..]

Kahn on the other end asked the system about his current predicament while keeping a guard against the opponent.

[System.. How is this possible? I don't have any skills that should allow me to absorb world energy. Even the Dark Engulfment skill under the Hero of Darkness title can only absorb Dark Magic & Darkness element.] queried Kahn as this sudden reveal was completely unexpected.

[The Ability Absorption Divine Ability allows the host to absorb the saturated forms of world energy. A direct source or an infused form of world energy can be absorbed by the host ever since the host broke through to the Semi-Saint Rank.] explained the system.

[So that's how it was.. Why didn't you tell me before?] he replied.

[The host didn't ask.]

Kahn quickly shifted his gaze towards the opponent and commanded his swords to attack the aura swords from the vampire.

One by one, the hundred swords from the opposite side that were infused with world energy started breaking and turned into intangible form... But rather than disappearing, Kahn's aura swords started absorbing them as the amount of world energy he was absorbing started increasing in small numbers.

The five hundred soldiers that were previously training in this arena gasped in surprise. It was their first time watching their leader being oppressed in a fight. By another swordsman at that.

Two more minutes passed and Kahn who was previously outmatched started treading blows at the vampire lord on an equal footing. Each time their swords clashed.. Kahn felt like Lucifer was sucking the world energy from the opponent's aura sword.

Just when the sword that Ismatrazel held started cracking as Kahn's attacks were sucking the energy within it, the vampire lord took a step back and spoke.

"Stop! I concede.." declared the vampire lord.

Gasp!

Dozens of gasps filled the underground arena and even Szayel looked at the battleground in disbelief.

"I only won because you were holding back. If you used more strength or speed, I wouldn't even be able to see your attacks." spoke Kahn.

He wasn't the kind to gloat over small victories so he directly addressed the key factor about his triumph.

"Yes. But it doesn't matter. You have won against me in a fair and square duel." replied the vampire lord in his regal and domineering tone.

"So does that mean our deal is in effect?" asked Kahn.

"Yes. But I have another proposition to add. It's not related to the business deal but between me and you." spoke Ismatrazel with a stern expression on his face.

"Huh?.. What is it?" asked Kahn with a curious expression.

The Vampire Lord replied in a calm yet authoritative tone and relayed his proposition to the young swordsman clad in black..

"Become my disciple!"

Chapter 150: True Reason

Stunned, everyone present in this underground arena stood stunned on the spot. A silence ensued in the surroundings and nobody even dared to breathe loudly.

This sudden proposal by the vampire clan leader, one of the top 5 strongest swordsmen in the entire empire left everyone baffled and speechless.

Even Kahn, the main center of attention, had 'NANI?!' expression. He too was caught off guard just like everyone else.

"What? Are you joking, Lord Clan leader?" he asked.

"No, I'm serious. I want you to become my disciple. I will personally train you." responded the vampire.

His countenance was full of valor and nobility. As if a hero of those ballads and folklore had turned into reality.

"Wait, why?" asked Kahn again. He couldn't think of possible reasons.

Was his display of strength during the test too phenomenal? Because he hadn't even used his best skills and techniques during the duel and even in his personal opinion.. It would only get passing marks.

Because in reality, the vampire lord was holding back all the time otherwise, he could've killed Kahn by accident if he didn't.

"Your talent in swordsmanship is no less than those chosen clan heirs who had the best of teachers and resources in the world to train. I would even say that you overshadow them by a lot. It's a talent that shouldn't go to waste.. I would fail my sword if I let you a genius such as yourself never reach bigger heights just because you don't have enough resources." said Ismatrazel.

There was no sense of coyness or some malicious intent behind his words. It was as if he genuinely wanted to groom Kahn and make him raise his talent.

But before any further discussions occurred.. Kahn replied.

"No!" he refused.

"What? Don't you understand the kind of opportunity I'm giving you?" asked the vampire.

Kahn took the epic rank domain artifact out of his pockets and activated it. Both he and the clan leader were engulfed under a dark dome.

The clan leader showed no surprise.. Epic rank artifacts were something he had seen thousands of times already.

For the next ten minutes.. There was a heated discussion between the two swordsmen. Nobody out of this black dome could see or hear anything that was being discussed within.

When Kahn finally deactivate the dome again..

The attitude of both these males had changed from the eager swordsmen to two somber and calculative elderly men who had seen the entire world.

"I still hope you do think of my offer one day." spoke Ismatrazel.

"Thank you again for extending this offer, lord clan leader. But I still need to refuse your generosity. I hope it doesn't affect our other deal." reiterated Kahn.

"Nothing shall affect it." spoke the clan leader and took out two jade medallions from his space ring. He threw one to Kahn and the other to Szayel.

"Use these to communicate with each other. I won't be able to respond to you given my duties. But my son should be able to manage the dealings and the ups and downs that may come in the future." spoke the vampire lord.

Kahn nodded in response and gestured to Albestros that it was time for them to leave.

Several guards escorted Kahn as per their leader's orders.

When the father and son duo also returned to their private quarters.. Szayel, who could not understand what transpired inside the dome asked his father..

"Lord Father.. I don't understand. Even though he indeed saved my life.. It's not something that would make you bend the rules and accept a human as your disciple." spoke Szayel.

He knew about his clan's ironclad rules that prohibited their members to accept other species and an outsider inside their clan in any way.

"For the first time.. I wish those rules didn't exist." sighed the father.

"Remember Szayel.. No matter what happens, you must become a very close friend to Kahn. That human boy is actually a prodigy born once in a millennium.

Not only has he created a saint rank sword skill while still being a semi-saint rank.. But he can also tap into the world energy. That's not something even the widely proclaimed geniuses of the various clans and factions can do.

World Energy is extremely essential to a Saint Rank fighter in this world. Even more important than mana. There's a limit to how much mana can you use.. But there's no limit on how much world energy can be used in a fight. At the end of the day.. It only comes to your own capabilities.

You might not have seen it but every single technique he executed was perfectly formed and lethal at the same time.. Even I felt like I was facing a natural warrior who trained inside hell for decades." explained the vampire lord.

"But that's not something worth breaking the ancient rules of the clan, right?" asked Szayel.

"You wouldn't understand since you're not a swordsman like us.. Every single attack he made was full of form, fluidity, killing intent and perfect execution; it's something only those who have fought in thousand wars could do.

Even I was nothing compared to him on that same level.

I thought it was just a legend.. But people like him do exist." he sat and contemplated.

"What type of people if I may ask, lord father." spoke Szayel.

"There was only one other person in the history of our empire who could do both these things while being only a semi-saint."

"Who?"

"It was none other than the first Emperor, Rathnaar." explained the clan leader.

"I even offered him a lot of money, resources to train.. A life where he wouldn't have to worry about wealth but he still refused." he revealed.

"But why? No matter how I look at it.. This was probably his biggest life-changing opportunity. Why would he refuse?" asked Szayel.

"Because of Vivian's ploy. And he understood that there are still many traitors who still back her up from the shadows. If he accepted.. He'd be the target of prejudice, ploys and many attempts on his life.

I can make rules.. But I can't make everyone in the clan inherently accept or abide them. That is the hard truth.

Besides, something he said was indeed true; Before inviting a guest inside.. We must clean out our house first." spoke Ismatrazel and ordered Szayel to follow him.

"Where are we going?" He asked his father.

To his question.. The vampire clan leader replied in a stern tone.

"It's about time we.. Discipline your sister."