

Darkness 281

Chapter 281 - The Response

The day of the quarterfinals finally arrived and Kahn departed to Zelda, the second richest district of the capital and the named Qaboj where the first and opening match of the new round will be held.

For now, no one had tried to contact or pressure him regarding the competition as if some invisible force had been barring the enemies. In actuality, it was all the efforts made by Kahn and his generals who had been creating the image of the underdog and a dark horse in the minds of the general populace of the capital.

And with the quarterfinals being broadcast throughout the empire, Kahn even had a bigger opportunity to make his name well known. Because the incident of the previous round had already made him realize that if he isn't in the limelight.. He was easy to be cut off by anyone with substantial influence and power.

And he wanted to avoid the scenario where some saint had put him in the ground again. So other than using the public as his form of defense, Kahn had no choice but to attract the whole empire's eyes on him at this point.

Doing this also ensured that his life would be secured and no power would try to target or kill him for some time and if he qualified for further stages.

The battle arena that held today's match was 3 times bigger in terms of size, audience capacity and the number of floors. Even the security guards here were at least beginner rank fighters.

Kahn felt like suddenly he entered an intergalactic tournament where he would have to fight gigantic aliens.

Even the battlefield itself was 1 kilometer in radius, indicating the scale of this competition was going to be on a completely different scale.

At this point, even a single seat cost 10 thousand gold coins yet the entire colosseum-style arena was full of people cheering for their respective fighters.

This time, Kahn had ordered all of their members from seven deadly sins to be present from here on. He spent a few hundred million just for their attires, traveling expenses and creating a fake background that'd make the organization members look like local rich tycoons and help them properly blend in with the crowd.

All of them were given space rings where at least a hundred million gold coins were kept that they'd have to use while betting on a candidate as per the orders.

Kahn was looking at considerable gains here as well. Because he wasn't a fool to think that his story and recent fame was enough to completely sway people towards him and make them bet their fortunes on him.

For now, they were only intrigued by him but not fully aware of his capabilities or the true rank. So being the greedy and shameless man he was.. Kahn only waited for the odds to be revealed.

After the commencement speech by the hosts and announcers, a cultural dance and singing act was put on similar to the opening of the Olympics on earth.

When the winning odds for the betting were revealed, it was 70:30 on the scoreboards. And an hour was offered to the audience in the arena and people watching throughout the empire to place their bets and register their amount on the official booths.

Just as he expected.. The Mikealson clan was indeed very powerful and influential to affect the odds by this much despite Kahn's attempt to increase his popularity among the masses.

Just the name Mikealson was more than enough to blindly trust and choose the opponent over him without a second thought.

[Go all the way in.] commanded Kahn to his people.

And finally, from two different corners of the battle ring, walked today's talented combatants of the young generation who were escorted by two squads of soldiers.

Kahn had already hidden his rank and stats to match that of a peak grandmaster swordsman since many saints in VIP rooms would be watching today's match so he came fully prepared.

All the top influential forces in the empire had sent their important figures such and commanding officers, heirs and some top rank saints despite this match being only the beginning of the quarterfinals. So even Kahn felt like things were getting real at this point.

As soon as both the parties at the center of the ring, both clad in their fighting gears and weapons; the announcer stood in between the young swordsman donned in black and golden longcoat with a black giantsword on his back and the redhead swordsman with a white and black attire who had a navy force style cap and a rapier sheathed on her waist.

"In front of me, stand both of today's combatants. So for all of our audience sitting in the arena and all the viewers watching throughout the Rakos empire, I want to ask both of today's fighters a question." asked the middle-aged elven emcee.

"Who do you think will win?" he asked and moved his mic towards Veronica.

Veronica folded her arms and looked at Kahn who was taller than her. She gave him a thoughtful look and spoke in a soft tone.

"I think I will." declared Veronica without any hesitation.

"And why do you think so?" asked the emcee curiously.

"Because my opponent isn't very skilled and his fighting style is crude. It is very clear that he didn't have any proper training from a skilled teacher either.

And during his previous match, he threw away his sword to beat the opponent with bare hands. It shows that he doesn't respect his sword as a warrior either.

And I will never lose to someone unskilled like him." spoke Veronica in a prideful tone.

It wasn't that she was being high on her horses.. Rather she spoke with facts because that was the real truth for Kahn. And her being a proper and honest warrior herself, she spoke her mind without holding back.

GASP!

Millions of people who were watching the live broadcast gasped throughout the empire at the same time.

Although she was being honest, her tone was misunderstood as her looking down and insulting her opponent.

"Mister Kahn, what would you like to say in response?" asked the emcee to Kahn.

Kahn slightly leaned towards the mic and spoke in a polite tone with a slight smirk on his face..

"Arrogance destroys the footholds of victory."

Shock! Gasp!

"Boaaaahhh!!!"

A billion people collectively gasped and also screamed out of surprise throughout the empire.

Just with one line.. Kahn roasted Veronica publicly.

Calling her arrogant also implied that she thought too highly of herself and her ignorance would be her downfall.

Not just Veronica but even the Mikeelson clan members who came in a few hundred thousands to support her were infuriated after Kahn's response.

Pissed! Veronica was thoroughly pissed off.

She tried to talk like a professional but her opponent acted like an immature manchild who insulted her instead. He had no sense of professional courtesy or any humbleness.

"Hmph! Let's see if he really has the strength to back his claims." spoke Isaac who was in one of the VIP rooms along with Veronica's father, who was a 4th stage saint and also his second uncle.

But unlike him, her father has no impulsive reaction or spoke a word as he kept looking at Kahn as if trying to see through him.

"That young man... there's something different about him." he spoke in a solemn tone.

Not only him but dozens of saints who had come to represent their respective forces and watch this match also had their gazes locked at Kahn for some reason.

On the battle ring, Veronica clenched her fist tightly as an exasperated expression appeared on her face.

"Big claims for a man who's about to lose." spoke Veronica with a hateful expression.

"Unlike you.. I don't have the habit of daydreaming." replied Kahn and went back to his corner of the ring while folding both of his arms behind his back.

Ding! Ding! Ding!

"Begin the match!" announced a thrall referee and the match officially started.

Veronica took her thin and mid-sized rapier with golden hilt while Kahn on the other brandished Lucifer.

Both of the combatants took their attacking stance and waited for the opponent to make the first move.

Boom!!

A burst of brown aura released from Veronica's body as she released her peak grandmaster rank strength.

Kahn could already guess that Veronica was only lacking in fewer levels than him so he too decided to not hold back.

Boom!!

A loud boom resounded in the ring as Kahn revealed his strength and rank with a release of black and red aura.

War Dominance!!

He quickly activated this skill and put intense pressure on the opponent right from the start.

"In my eyes.. Trash like you will never be a true swordsman." spoke Veronica from the other end.

To her words, Kahn gave a playful smile as he spoke in a tyrannical voice.

"Winners do not care about the opinions of the losers."

Chapter 282 - The Title

Stunned. The entire arena was stunned and so were the people watching this match throughout the empire. From his proclamation.. Kahn implied that he'd easily win the match without any worries.

"This insolent bastard.." murmured Veronica under her breath and her eyes were fired up the very next second.

Squirm! Squirm!

The brown aura leaked from her body squirmed and soon, multiple strands of this aura that was spread around her end of the battlefield started coalescing and soon, 20 giant rapier swords made of highly condensed aura and mana together formed in the air.

4 groups of elemental swords, each having 5 of them and varying from fire, water, wind and light elements floated in the air above.

Each of these massive rapier swords was 5 meters long and 1 meter in width. Each one of them exuded intense heat, pressure, speed and destructive force respectively.

All the people watching this match were able to infer that the mana structure and control behind these swords were extremely precise and the mastery of the user over these elements was top-notch quality.

Many saints spread throughout the arena also watched from their respective rooms and nodded in approval.

"As expected from the daughter of the number one swordsman of the empire. Her mana control and aura combination with her skills is already at such a high degree.

And normally, any grandmaster individual can use one to two elements fused in their skills. Yet she has created 4 different elemental swords at once!

Like the rumors claimed... she has indeed unlocked a unique rank class we know as the Magic Swordsman!" spoke the emcee as if it was his own daughter fighting in the ring.

Even the majority of the audience was awestruck and nodded in agreement.

Sigh!

[What a show-off. Even Omega has better skills and attacking capabilities than her.] thought Kahn and his black and red aura erupted intensely as he too decided to reveal his skills in front of all the audience.

Swoosh! Clatter! Clink!

Kahn's aura also spread widely and he created 20 giantswords of his own that match the same attributes of the aura swords created by the opponent.

Sword Savant!

Kahn used the skill he got by absorbing skills and eating Arkham, the peak grandmaster magic swordsman's core.

This was an S Rank ability and also the same level of skill he compared to the one displayed by the opponent.

Flabbergasted!

Not just the normal audience but even seasoned warriors and saints were flabbergasted after this revelation.

Millions of gasps were heard as Kahn also revealed this skill, indicating that he too was a magic swordsman.

Although Kahn couldn't use the Sword King skill as of now, because it was a semi-saint skill that he created by merging sword lord and sword savant skills he got from Dormammu Volstov & Arkham Holland respectively, he could at least use this skill for now.

Because Sword King skill could help him create 100 aura swords already and even Ismaetrael Mor Vandereich, a 4th stage saint swordsman had claimed it to be a saint rank skill based on its potential alone.

So Kahn did not want to reveal his hand quickly as it would affect his odds in the next match and the money he'd lose will be in the hundreds of trillions.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Veronica in disbelief.

The only thing she was proud of in her life that also played a big part in her rise in strength and rank as a swordswoman till this point was also something shared by her opponent?

In the whole Rakos Empire, there were only 70 magic swordsmen and even among them; there wasn't a single person who unlocked this unique rank class under the age of 30.

Even her father who was labeled as the no. 1 swordsman of the empire unlocked this profession at the age of 35 while she was only 25 years old. Her talent was already only second to her cousin in their clan but no one matched her as far as a sword was concerned.

Yet the no-name opponent she declared as an unskilled and unrefined fighter also happened to have unlocked this class as well. This completely thwarted her notions of reality as she was no longer the only magic swordswoman of the younger generation.

"You said I'm unskilled and that's why I'll lose, right?"

Then show me your true skills then. I'll let you have the first hand and only defend for the next 10 minutes.

If you can defend me in that timeframe.. I'll admit my loss." spoke Kahn as he openly challenged and provoked Veronica.

Silence.. The arena was filled with silence again.

"This guy... is he not afraid of the Mikealson Clan?"

Saying that he'll only defend against her attacks means he's seriously looking down on her pride as a warrior." spoke a demonkin mage saint from the Demi-Human faction.

"Ah.. This young man is too presumptuous. Does he not know who trained this girl?"

She was holding a sword in her hands before she was even 5 years old." spoke a mage saint from the Mikealson clan.

At this moment.. Veronica was thoroughly infuriated. After every exchange since they entered the battle ring, all Kahn had done was undermine, challenge and now even saying that he'll only defend against her attacks.

His remarks were something she had never been subjected to even from her father. Yet this pretentious bastard was acting as if she wasn't even qualified to fight on even terms with him.

Little did anyone know that Kahn was doing this to furnish his rusty swordsmanship skills and use this opportunity to raise their effectiveness and mastery to a whole degree.

Because even now, his skills were only at peak grandmaster rank and he wanted to breakthrough to saint rank in sword weapon.

Besides, the best way to gauge an enemy's strength was to let them attack you first and then analyze their moves and patterns. Because randomly swinging a sword against a truly skilled fighter only worked in novels and mangas.

"You!.. You!.. Fine then. Don't say later that I didn't give you a chance to fight equally." spoke Veronica and the very next second.. His image flickered from 200 meters away and appeared in a 150 meters radius on Kahn's left side.

But before he could focus or see through her direction, her physique vanished into thin air and she came 100 meters close in the next second.

Kahn already had Survival Instinct blessing and Hunter's Intent skill activated so he could feel Veronica's killing intent locked on him. It was also the reason his mind could at least detect her direction.

If not, he wouldn't be able to detect her presence at all.

Swing!

The next moment, Kahn quickly turned on his backside and swung lucifer.

Clang!!

Spark!!

Before the audience could even register her, Veronica quickly appeared behind Kahn's back and now both their swords clashed against each other as sparks flew between their weapons.

"Not bad. You can at least sense me." she said and her body flashed again.

But at this same time, her giant mana swords also flew swiftly and attacked in Kahn's direction.

Bang!!

Shrill!!

Boom!!

Kahn's own swords also attacked and clashed against those swords because he already sensed their movements.

At this exact moment, all of his sensing skills were activated including the sonar resonance skill, heat sense, hunter's intent and survival instinct.

But because he had limited his stats and rank to match the opponent, even Kahn was having a hard time completely detecting her.

Shing!

He sidestepped and parried a thrust made towards his chest as Veronica's figure appeared and flickered the next moment.

Afterimages after afterimages appeared and disappeared as Kahn kept on defending, evading and parrying the sudden sword thrusts, slashes and swings.

[System, how's the progress?] asked Kahn.

[The combat techniques mastery for defensive and parrying skills has improved.

Current progress : 84%] replied the system in its usual lifeless and robotic voice.

[Good.] thought Kahn.

This was also a test for him to properly face a more skilled enemy on the same level. Because he always couldn't rely on his levels and rank as a semi-saint saint.

So by using the Weapon Mastery and Combat Techniques Mastery blessings given by Kravel, the war deity; Kahn planned to increase his proficiency in these skills and techniques while facing a true genius like Veronica.

As of now.. She was as fast as a bullet. And if not for his various lifesaving and sensory skills, he'd have been pierced in the heart already.

At this moment inside the VIP room of the Mikealson clan... 10 individuals were watching the match.

3 of whom were the close family to the swordmaiden fighting in the battle ring.

Isaac Mikealson, the beginner rank grandmaster knight who was also Veronica's cousin stood was seated behind his uncle and his other cousin.

"This guy has really dug his own grave by pissing her off. Look how he's barely avoiding her attacks at the last moment.

I guess he didn't know...

That her prestige isn't just because of her heritage or her family background. But mainly because of her skills and speed.

After all, her title is.." spoke Isaac as he gazed at Kahn's struggling figure and continued with a confident smile...

"The Flash Goddess."

Chapter 283 - One In Control

The battle between the two peak grandmaster sword users continued. The lithe rapier user swordswoman against the tall and ripped greatsword user swordsman continued as the sound of their metallic swords clashing against each other filled the battle arena.

Kahn who was on the receiving end of the swift and lethal stab, thrust, pincer and slashing attacks was successfully evading these attacks.

To most of the audience, Kahn looked like a clown barely managing to back his words and saving his ass in the nick of time.

Although he said that he'd only defend for the first ten minutes, people expected him to hold his ground like a seasoned warrior and easily overpower his opponent like a boss.

But the scene in front of them was the opposite because at this moment, Kahn was running, dodging and rolling sideways as if a headless chicken was frantically running around.

However, only experts such as old swordsmen and many saints were able to notice what was happening in reality.

Inside the Mikealson clan's VIP room.. Veronica's father, Stronoff Mikealson who was titled as the number of swordsman of the whole Rakos Empire had his eyes wide open.

"What kind of freak is he..." spoke Stronoff in his majestic and domineering voice.

"Huh? What do you mean, second uncle?" asked Isaac.

The middle-aged man with short gray hair and a subtle beard who was donned in a violet epic rank armor set spoke in a stern tone.

"You're a knight so you won't notice this.

My daughter specializes in a lightweight sword and her physique is suited for less powerful but fast attacks so she seems at an advantage to normal people.

But look at her opponent." spoke the fourth stage saint.

"What of him? He barely seems to be holding his end." said Isaac.

"And this is why you still haven't become a peak grandmaster yet." said Stronoff as he gave an annoyed look to Isaac.

"He looks like he's only defending but in reality..

His footwork is improving and he's lowering the number of openings for Veronica to attack.

And while doing so, he's also directing her next attack with his greatsword by pushing her in a particular direction as he's parrying her sword or evading her strikes.

He's not a weakling who's only good at running... he's actually dictating the flow of her attacks." said the fourth stage saint who was on the same level as the clan leader of the Vandereich clan but was a better swordsman.

"How? I don't see any difference." spoke Isaac.

Sigh!

Suddenly, a light sigh was heard in the room and the raven-haired young woman who sat across Stronoff spoke in a serious tone while he evaluated the ongoing battle.

"Look at the next strike Veronica makes. And then you'll know." she said as her deep blue eyes focused on the battle ring.

Shing!!

Kahn quickly covered his left side and a slashing attack was blocked and Veronica's slim figure suddenly appeared on the projection screens.

"Getting better." said Kahn and stepped back as he waved the sharp blade of the greatsword pushed away Veronica and took another defensive stance.

Veronica slightly lost her footing as her body was already in momentum but then quickly recovered it and made another attack towards Kahn's figure.

Boom!

Kahn used Side Hopper and dodged one of the 5 meter long fire elemental aura swords that belonged to his opponent.

"Now do you see it?" asked Stronoff.

"Yes.. I do." said Isaac as his brain finally registered what was happening.

When Kahn blocked the attack on his left side, his moving swing pushed back Veronica who was in motion and had aimed for Kahn's chest. After he pushed her by 30 degrees left, her balance slightly went off the mark and in the meantime, Kahn only took two steps back and quickly took a defensive stance.

Veronica who was shoved away saw the close distance between her and the opponent as well as his defensive stance, ended up taking another swing at him subconsciously rather than looking for another opening or creating one for the next attack.

She only saw Kahn who was challenging her with that stance and ended up attacking him anyway.

To normal people, it looked like he was only defending, but for truly skilled and experienced people... they could see the mind games Kahn was playing.

"Her attacks need speed and momentum to be precise and lethal, yet he's not only defending against them, he's also making her move excessively and breaking her form bit by bit.

At this rate, she will lose her flow and get tired out in just 5 more minutes.

For what reason... I don't know. But that young man.." said Stronoff as his tone turned serious.

"He's the one truly in control of this battlefield." he said in a grim tone.

In the ongoing battle, Kahn actually had many skills to take her down but it will reveal his identity because those skills belonged to different classes and also Kahn using Darkness or dark magic element skills would expose him.

Ten minutes had already passed some time ago yet Kahn was insistently still kept defending.

[Whoa.. She lives up to her reputation.

Too fast, precise and lethal as she uses those flash steps.

Looks like Yoruichi got a competition.] thought Kahn.

[System, how much?] asked Kahn.

[The host has completed proficiency in all evasion, parrying and movement skills.

Current progress : 100%] responded the system.

[Good. Now, let's move to the next step.] he thought.

"Aurablade Tornado!" exclaimed Veronica and a swirling attack made of dozens of different elemental aura swords were launched like a storm from her next swing.

Shroom!!

Clatter!

Shred!!

The next moment however, instead of evading the attack, Kahn stood right on the spot and took the strike.

Boom!!

A loud noise resounded in the battle arena as Kahn, who looked like he no longer had the strength to run away or defend, finally got hit by Veronica's attacks.

A dust cloud formed as the arena floor was shredded by the female swordswoman's powerful attack and Kahn's figure was nowhere to be seen.

A coy voice resounded in the battle ring as Kahn's figure appeared out of the dust cloud. His longcoat was shredded from the opponent's attack and soon dropped on the ground.

A half-naked man whose ripped upper body with six pack abs and visible muscles was exposed to the public of the empire.

"My my.. Aren't you a hasty one? If you liked me that much.. We could've waited till the match was over. There's no need to take off my clothes in public."

Said Kahn as he gave a devilish smirk to the female opponent.

However, the next second, another remark came from his mouth that shook Veronica's core as soon as she heard the words from her opponent.

"Let me win the match and I will give you a private show."

Chapter 284 - Shameless Fanservice

After Kahn's longcoat fell off and his ripped abs, broad shoulders, strong forearms, manly chest along with pure muscles were displayed to the entire empire on the projection screens, the young swordsman's manly figure gave everyone a big surprise.

Because even for someone of his age, he was extremely well built and his body proportions were well balanced.

"Let me win the match and I will give you a private show." said Kahn as he winked at the young woman.

Stunned! Veronica was stunned.

In front of billions of people.. Kahn was openly making lascivious comments in an ongoing battle; with half of his body exposed at that.

"What a shameless bastard!"

"Oye.. The kids are watching!"

"Disgraceful cunt! How dare he talk to a woman like that!" shouted millions of men in a disapproving tone.

Millions of self-proclaimed noble and honorable males of different species and races along with the feminazis criticized Kahn for his words.

However, the females varying from species to species among the audience and the ones watching on broadcasting screens had a flustered face at this moment.

"Sister.. I think I just fell in love." spoke a young demonkin girl.

"So sexy.. I want to be his girlfriend!" said a beautiful elven girl.

"Look at those abs and muscles. I want him!" spoke an old noblewoman in one of the VIP rooms.

"Kyaaahhh!! Marry me, sir Kahn!" screamed a teenage girl.

"Become my man! I'll be your slave!" a woman in her mid-30s shouted in excitement.

Contrary to other people's opinions... the ladies gang had a different perspective as millions of them lusted after Kahn's body together.

Kahn was doing a shameless fanservice for his female fans.

[Ah... why is my audience base is full of horny people?] asked Kahn himself as he let out a sigh.

[[Author : Same buddy. I wonder the same.]]

Veronica also recovered her flustered expression and then her eyes also turned hateful towards Kahn again.

Because from the beginning till now, he really hadn't treated her as an equal. Rather made banter, looked down on her and now made sleazy remarks in front of the public.

Not just her but most of the Mikealson clan members were also infuriated at this point.

Instead of fighting like an honorable warrior with his skills and strength... Kahn acted like a local thug who even harassed women openly. Completely opposite of what one would expect from a young and talented genius who became a peak grandmaster at such a young age.

"Commoner trash will always be commoner trash. He has no nobility in his conduct." spoke Isaac in the VIP room.

However, Stronoff had a different opinion as he spoke in a stern and deep voice.

"The powerful do not need to put up a pretense in front of others. And neither do they care.

And this guy... he's good at getting inside his enemy's head.

From the first words he spoke till now.. He's making my daughter lose her composure." spoke Stronoff as if he was not worried about his daughter in the battle ring.

"I just hope she can see through his antics and not get led by the nose. Because so far.. He hasn't even attacked her properly. So we shouldn't look down on him." spoke the number one swordsman of the empire as he keenly paid attention to the match.

Kahn, who was currently engaged in a fierce battle with Veronica, had a calm mind despite being pushed around by the young swordswoman.

Just like her father said, it was Kahn's plan from the beginning. He wasn't a shining white knight who cared about public opinion or wanted to make a good impression on the audience.

The more people hated him, the better. Because that way, he'd get filthy rich as the betting odds would be against him.

Clang! Clang!

Veronica's feet stumbled as Kahn shoved her again.

"Hey, rascal! Why don't you attack me as well? The 10 minutes have passed already. So stop hiding and fight like a man." said Veronica.

"Ah.. But I'm scared of hurting such a pretty and delicate girl like you. What kind of man I would be if I hit such a beauty?" he replied in a prideful and noble tone.

[This! Fucking! Bastard!] cursed Veronica and next moment.. Her body leaked a deathly aura that quickly filled the battle ring.

And just in 10 seconds.. Her aura coalesced together and now in front of the entire audience and Kahn.. Stood 5 Veronica identical to each other.

[That.. I guess she isn't just a talk. Her speed is so fast that she can create identical copies and afterimages to this degree.

I've really struck gold.] thought Kahn as a sinister smile. Appeared on his face.

"You have successfully angered me. Don't think I'll go easy on you from now!" shouted Veronica and in a flash, all her copies also disappeared from the spot.

"Fine then. I guess I'll stop playing around." replied Kahn and then the next moment, he too disappeared from his spot.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Swoosh!

Bang!

Before the audience could even register anything..

Sudden outbursts of loud sword strikes and then flickers of sparks filled the battlefield and the most terrifying part was that even the audience or the projection screens could barely see white and black flashes clashing against each other in microseconds and then appeared at a different spot.

Kahn had finally activated all of his speed, attack and strength enhancing abilities and currently.. He was just as fast as Veronica.

He evenly matched her speed and agility while their attacks filled the entire battlefield with shockwaves and sparks of swords clashing.

BOOM!!

Veronica's aura swords that were hovering in the air attacked the ground and loud explosions of fire, water, wind and lightning strikes shook the battlefield with their multicolored bursts.

"You arrogant bastard! I'll crush down that fake pride of yours." spoke Veronica as her figure appeared on the other end of the ring.

Kahn suddenly appeared on the other end with a grin on his face and finally, he too started commanding his aura blades to attack the agile opponent.

"You see.. The difference between you and me isn't just about levels or our combat techniques." he said with a tyrannical voice and gave a death stare to the opponent as if he finally had enough of entertaining her and spoke in a grim tone.

"The fact that you consider yourself as an equal to me, is being arrogant in itself."

Chapter 285 - Too Young

Kahn made another proclamation against his opponent but this time.. There was something fundamentally different about his tone at this point. Even Veronica felt a sense of dread as she looked into his eyes.

"What.. What's happening?" she spoke softly as her body felt a bit slow compared to before.

Till this point, Kahn was only on the defensive mode as he wanted to increase his proficiency in his evasion, parrying and defensive skills and abilities. But now that they had reached 100% after constantly challenging his limits and defending against Veronica's unparalleled skills and attacks.. Kahn had completed his first objective for the match.

And now... he had no reason to play along with the girl anymore.

Kahn took a deep sigh as his menacing black and red aura burst out of the body that quickly suppressed the brown aura released by the female swordswoman.

His eyes turned that of a tyrant looking down upon a weakling.

"If this is the extent of your skills.. Then your blade shall never reach me." he said.

BOOM!!

A burst of mana erupted out of Lucifer as the blade lit on fire.

Kahn activated the draconian bloodline effect and the next second, he activated all of his speed-enhancing and attack buff skills that made him twice stronger in terms of physical strength, attributes and skills damage output.

Till now.. He was only using Veronica as a sparring partner and not as an opponent. Although he admired her skills and talent.. There was nothing he cared about the opponent herself.

"Come.. Let me show you what a real battle looks like." said Kahn as he created 30 blades out of his aura and mana fused together.

Unlike before.. These swords shone brightly and released an oppressive aura themselves. No longer just simple aura blades.

Kahn walked menacingly towards the fear-stricken Veronica who was currently under the effect of his Bloodlust skill that any enemy weaker than him in a fearful state.

Kahn's body suddenly appeared right in front of Veronica and he made a swift vertical slash with both hands holding lucifer.

Clang!

Veronica was pushed 10 meters away after barely defending against that strike at the last moment.

"How... how did he become so fast?" she asked herself in disbelief but quickly recovered her composure.

She used her clone skills and 4 more of her identical copies appeared around her. And in front of all the onlookers, 5 Veronica disappeared from the spot.

Swoosh!

Veronica appeared right behind Kahn and made a thrusting attack towards his back but the next second, instead of acting alarmed or evading, Kahn simply moved his upper body slightly and the blade passed by his chest.

But before she could retract the sword, Kahn's left hand quickly grabbed her neck.

Bang!

He quickly swung lucifer horizontally on his right side and another Veronica appeared.

Crack!

His left palm cracked the opponent's neck and soon, the Veronica he had choked burst into thin air.

"I guess that's the downside of this skill. The copies don't even possess the 20% of her original strength." he spoke and ducked down as another slash was evaded on his back.

Kahn's aura blades were still fighting against the ones from the opponent but this time.. They too had an upper hand since Kahn wasn't hiding his attack buff skills.

Stab!

Kahn quickly stabbed Veronica in the back and Lucifer released a burst of fire that burned down this imitation as well.

Then he quickly lunged towards the one on the right and with a heavy vertical slash attack, he cut the opponent in half.

Another burst of mana appeared and then faded as Kahn took down three of her copies in just 20 seconds.

"So they're just for intimidation and distracting the enemy. A good skill to confuse and surprise an enemy.

But the attack power is greatly reduced." spoke Kahn as he publicly announced the biggest demerit of this signature skill used by his opponent.

Now, only two copies remained including the real Veronica.

And right after him disclosing the biggest flaw of her skill, Veronica who had hidden herself using some kind of skill leaked her killing intent on Kahn's south-eastern direction.

Boom!!

Boom!!

Crack!!

Just then, multiple aura blades clashed in the air above and Kahn's aura blades started breaking and destroying the ones made by the opposition.

However, Kahn quickly sidestepped and evaded a stabbing attack as another Veronica appeared out of thin air.

While her body was still afloat in the air, Kahn's eyes moved and even scared her because the him now could easily see and sense her attacks coming.

[Impossible! How can he see me so suddenly? He could barely sense my strikes before.] she thought.

Kick!

Kahn kicked her in the stomach and with a swift horizontal slash... he beheaded Veronica.

Boom!

A shockwave filled the battlefield as another copy of the swordswoman exploded after getting killed.

Kahn simply smirked and then, he turned to his back and spoke in a mischievous tone.

"Hey, your Shadow Clone Jutsu needs some work."

The next moment.. Veronica's figure appeared 20 meters away out of thin air as she had a bewildered expression on her face.

"You... you could sense where my real body was?" she asked in disbelief.

"Of course.. After all, the bond between us transcends beyond human understanding." taunted Kahn instead of answering straightly.

With Survival Instinct divine ability and Hunter's Intent skill being active all the time, he knew her location since the beginning. Just that he was only putting up an act of being clueless.

SHRILL!!

The next second however.. Kahn used Executioner's Gaze and paralyzed her on the spot.

Kahn lifted lucifer upwards and soon, all the aura swords made of different destructive elements hovered towards Veronica.

BANG!!

BOOM!!

BOOM!!

Let it be fire or lightning, all his 5 metered long aura blades made from different elements attacked the paralyzed opponent and the opposite side of the battlefield was filled with explosions and the floor itself cracked open.

After 2 minutes... the cloud of dust finally faded and the figure of a girl with multiple bruises, charred body parts, deep and bloody wounds was revealed.

At this moment.. the real Veronica was covered in blood as half of her body was riddled with deep wounds and apart from her chest and waist.. All her clothes were tattered to pieces.

Veronica was bleeding profusely and barely gasping for breath.

Billions of people watching throughout the Rakos Empire gasped in surprise and some even feared for the fate of this young woman.

Tap! Tap!

Kahn walked towards her with indifferent eyes as he looked at the bloodied figure of the opponent as she barely managed to stay conscious at this moment.

His remorseless eyes landed on the once elegant and beautiful woman as he spoke in a tyrannical and grim tone.

"You're hundred years too young to fight me as equals."

Chapter 286 - Center Of Hatred

In front of nearly 5 million people in the battle arena and more than 3 billion people watching on broadcasting screens throughout the Rakos empire... Kahn put the young talent of the Mikealson clan in the ground and riddled with wounds.

"Why isn't anyone counting?!" shouted Kahn as he gave a deathly stare to the referee.

The referee who was scared witless, ran towards Veronica who was barely conscious at the moment and started counting.

"One! Two! Three!"

Ding! Ding! Ding!

"The winner is candidate Kahn of Rukon District!" declared the referee.

"Boo!!"

"Boohoo!!"

"What a pathetic loser! How can he harm a woman this badly?" spoke some people among the audience.

"What bullshit! So he should be gentle in a fight just because the opponent is a woman?"

Didn't you see how she almost tried to kill him since the beginning of the match?" retorted one of the men from seven deadly sins who was seated as a merchant in the crowd.

"Poor girl. Somebody call the healers. She's badly wounded!"

Soon, millions and then over a billion people started worrying about Veronica who looked like she was in mortal danger to many people watching. The majority of them didn't like Kahn's treatment of the female swordswoman in the end.

Kahn on the other hand didn't even bother looking at the opponent as he walked away carefreely with his greatsword on the shoulder.

The negative public opinion was exactly what he wanted to achieve from this match.

[Gather the money and meet me at the manor.] commanded Kahn to all the generals and Omega who were present in the crowd.

And all of this was done to make more people bet against him in the next match. Because he knew that even if he won the match honorably.. He'd still be looked down upon in the semifinals anyway.

So why not use it to make more profits?

As for why he didn't fear the wrath of the Mikealson clan for injuring and then taunting Veronica even in her pitiful state was because even when people hated him, if anything happened to him till the semifinals, everyone would naturally blame the shift on them.

At this exact moment, Stronoff Mikealson spoke in their VIP room.

"Send a second stage saint to protect that young man."

He said with a cautious expression on his face.

Isaac, who was enraged to his core after watching his cousin wounded to this extent was left speechless.

"Second uncle, why do we have to protect that bastard?! Can't you see what he did?!" shouted the blonde young knight.

"Silence! This isn't something so simple. Anything happening to him can cost us a lot." spoke the fourth stage saint.

This matter was so crucial that even the Mikealson clan itself was forced to provide him security instead. As a single rumor was more than enough to destroy their image in front of the whole empire and many of their enemies would use that opportunity to oppress and then pick fights with them.

Not only their reputation but also their businesses and properties would be criticized and they'd be in a pinch just because something happened to Kahn.

BOOM!!

A deathly aura erupted in their VIP room and almost shattered the windows and furniture in the room as everyone excluding Stronoff were shoved away because of this sudden burst of energy.

At this exact moment.. Kahn, who was leaving the battle ring sensed an intense killing aura coming from the 7th floor of the battle arena. Exactly from the VIP room of the Mikealson clan.

But instead of getting worried or being fearful for his life, he gave a light smirk in their direction and left the battle ring carefreely.

He could sense that the killing intent wasn't released by a saint but a semi-saint like himself so he didn't feel any sense of threat to his life and hence didn't bother entertaining whoever it was.

"Calm down, Cassandra." spoke Stronoff to his niece.

It was Cassandra Mikealson who had an extremely infuriated expression on her face as she looked at Veronica who was being escorted out on a stretcher and then Kahn who didn't even bother looking at her injured body as if he didn't care if she lived or died.

"Kahn is it.. He better hope that we don't meet in a match. He hurt our Veronica this badly..

If he ends up facing me in the next round.. I'll kill him myself!" spoke the raven-haired sorceress donned in black robes.

Her wrathful gaze had marked Kahn as she imprinted his face in her mind.

ONE HOUR LATER

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Veronica came inside their VIP room after recovering from all of her wounds that looked lethal previously. Her attire was exactly the same prior to the match.

Thanks to the high-grade health and stamina recovery potions, she managed to recover and heal completely after drinking a few bottles.

But instead of speaking a word to anyone and even her cousins. She steadily walked towards her father who was seated on a big and luxurious chair like a king.

She knelt on one knee in front of her father and spoke in an exhausted tone.

"Please forgive me, father. I have brought shame to your and our clan's name." spoke Veronica with a heavy heart.

She still hadn't recovered mentally and couldn't accept the fact that she lost to Kahn in front of the whole empire. And that too when her father who trained her since a young age was watching the match himself.

"I could've accepted my loss if it was a semi-saint. But this... this is completely unacceptable!" she said and soon, tears trickled down her cheeks and ran like a river.

Sob! Sob!

Veronica started sobbing while Cassandra leaned towards her and embraced her in her arms.

"Not only did I lose to just a peak grandmaster.. But he is also a magic swordsman just like me.

I'm sorry.. Your daughter has failed you." she said while still sobbing.

Stronoff on the other end didn't have a look of disappointment as he gazed at his daughter.

"You haven't brought any shame to me or our family name. You're neither a disappointment nor should you feel embarrassed." spoke the number one swordsman of the empire.

"Huh.. Why? I don't understand father." she asked.

Sigh!

Stronoff let out a hushed sigh and spoke in a stern tone as he responded to his confused daughter.

"Because you didn't have any chance of winning to begin with."

Chapter 287 - The Next Step

After the straight to the facts words spoken by Stronoff that appeared hurtful to everyone in the room, especially to his own daughter who just had a little emotional breakdown after being unable to accept his defeat; a silence ensued in the room.

However, based on his tone and the calm demeanor.. Most of them quickly understood that he must have had a reason for speaking those words.

"Everyone aside from Veronica and Cassandra Leave the room." he ordered.

This baffled many of them but everyone decided to follow the orders of the clan's commander without thinking for another second.

"Yes, your lordship." spoke one of the attendants and everyone, including Isaac left the room.

Stronoff then took a unique rank isolation artifact and separated the room from the outside world as the thick barrier encapsulated the entire room.

"Let me explain why I said so." he said and soon, he started elaborating the meaning behind his direct words.

After just 2 minutes of their conversation.. Both Veronica and Cassandra had their eyes wide open in disbelief.

Both of their bewildered eyes and aghast expressions were as clear as the sky.

"That's impossible!" spoke both Veronica & Cassandra at the same time. Their voices synced and echoed in the room.

"I can say that we are lucky that I came to see today's match. Only someone who is at least a 4th stage saint can sense it.

Since no one among the other saints present here is at least on my level or a stage above me... I don't think the majority of the people or any of the top figures of the empire have figured it out yet.

And I heard that no one apart from that peak grandmaster blacksmith Albestros Winston has backed him officially.

So I'm certain no one else knows of this even now.

This is a great opportunity for our clan." he spoke in a slightly excited tone.

"What do you mean by a great opportunity, second uncle?" asked Cassandra.

But instead of responding to his niece, Stronoff looked towards the battle ring with expectant eyes.

"Kassandra, if you ever cross paths with him... Be extremely careful of this young man." he said and then next moment, spoke with a resolute voice.

"If he doesn't accept our proposal through riches, power and authority.."

His following words petrified both Veronica and Cassandra on the spot.

"I shall even offer to make him my direct disciple."

Kahn had returned to his manor by the night after changing his appearance a couple of times and hiding in between the crowd.

Many people tried to target him again while some tried to make shady deals with him so he was left with only choice and left the battle arena without raising suspicion.

After the management informed him about his semifinal match that will be held 12 days later, he had quite some time on his hands.

This time however, instead of holding a meeting between his subordinates.. Kahn had a meeting with the old man Albestros in his private office inside the manor.

"So how did it go? Do you think you'll succeed?" asked the old man in a deep voice.

"I'm not sure. Things are still as dangerous as before. But for now, your name and position in the capital is completely secured.

Even if I were to provoke someone powerful.. No one, including the three factions, would dare to touch or harm you in any way.

To everyone, I'm just someone you hired as a bodyguard when leaving the flavot city in case they tried to do some background research on me.

And I have only worked as your stand-in for a short time in the Bloodborne company since all the official records and documentation have you as the listed owner.

I have taken care of everything." said Kahn.

"But Kahn.. I'm still worried about the outcome of the competition. If you succeed in your plans..

You know that only death awaits you." spoke Albestros in a caring tone.

"I know. And that's exactly why I have planned everything ahead. In just a month.. I will achieve all my goals. And if things go as planned..

Not even those seventh stage saints can touch me." spoke Kahn in a relaxed tone as he leaned against the sofa.

"Still... is it really necessary though? We already have so much money and prestige.

It's more than enough to live a good and peaceful life in the capital. Why must you risk your life?" asked the old blacksmith dressed in white and blue regal clothes.

To his words full of worry, Kahn responded in a mischievous tone.

"I don't want peace. I want problems. Always!"

He said and chuckled lightly.

"I just want to make sure that no one dares to step on me like I'm some ant or a side character of a story who gets oppressed because he's weak.

My goals aren't set out of my greed but my own will as well as an absolute necessity.

So I must take this risk or I won't get another chance in this life." replied Kahn with a thoughtful expression.

"Besides.. This Rukon District is too small for someone like me.

And don't worry.. I'll make sure that our future is 100 times better than what we currently have. Even those three factions won't be able to touch us." he said with a confident tone.

"Then what are you going to do in the meantime? Fourteen days gap is too long to waste." spoke Albestros as he sipped on a glass of wine.

"Well.. I'm not going to be as ignorant as before. Everyone remaining in the upcoming matches is an enemy. And I once heard a very good saying.

So I'm going to watch their matches and know who I'm up against.

Especially those semi-saints who are the only threat to me." he replied.

"Is that so? Then tell me what was that saying." commended Albestros.

Kahn simply took a small breath and replied with a benign smile.

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles."

Chapter 288 - Keeping An Eye

The following day, the 2nd round was to be held in one of the top 10 districts of the capital.

After yesterday's match and the grand display of fighting skills and decisive attacks.. The mood around the competition itself changed and for the first time, a dark horse who was a commoner by birth had qualified for the semifinals in the past one thousand years old history of this competition.

Regardless of whether one liked the results of the match or not, Kahn had become the first one to accomplish such a feat. And even if one resented him because of how he treated his opponent at the end of the match, there was no doubt that he too was a real deal.

Because magic swordsmen were as rare as phoenix's feather already. And he too was one of the only 2 individuals under the age of 30 to unlock the unique class.

Since nobody knew that Kahn actually wasn't a magic swordsman but only had that class's unique skills after he absorbed them from Arkham.. The public opinion about him turned his name into one of the prodigies of the empire. And that too with the fact that he had no master till this point.

Kahn had become a well-known swordsman throughout the empire despite the majority of the people hating him. Because at the end of the day...

Bad publicity was still publicity.

The next day, he traveled to watch the next match between the next candidates. He changed his appearance to an elderly snakekin business tycoon and came to the battle arena.

This was the match between the Dual Sword Saintess aka Celine Armitage, the halfbreed demonkin swordswoman who was also one of the chosen representatives of the Neutral Faction.

And unlike Cassandra, she had used the token to participate directly from the 5th round. Yet, her strength and skills made her well known as she didn't lose a single match up to this point.

And her opponent was a dual swordsman who was also nicknamed as the Black Flame because of his mastery over fire-related skills and combat techniques using his swords.

And coincidentally.. Kahn knew this fighter as they had fought together once in a match.

It was none other than Niklaus, one of the brothers who Kahn met and fought along with in the fifth round of the competition.

As for Elijah, the older brother; he was defeated by none other than the chosen representative of the Pureblood faction. The one Kahn had yet to meet or face in the competition so far.

And out of the remaining candidates.. He was the only remaining Peak Grandmaster fighter since Kahn defeated Veronica yesterday.

Although the battle was already decided based on the rank, strength and levels of the fighters.. People still looked forward to the match because they knew that it would still be entertaining.

And many wanted to see if Niklaus could force the dual sword saintess to reveal her best combat techniques.

As for Kahn, he wasn't here to bet but to watch and study his potential opponents that he may have to fight in the semifinals.

Since watching a fight on broadcasting screens was different compared to real-life where he couldn't even sense the combatant's aura they released during a fight, it was the only plausible option for him.

After the whole announcement and introductions stuff happened just like yesterday, the match between these dual swords began.

Niklaus, who was clad in his usual black armor set while equipped with two epic rank swords that had sharp teeth-like blades faced against Celine, who was adorned in black and red lightweight armor and had two epic rank red swords as if they were just taken out of the furnace.

The white-haired young woman with one long white horn and the other short red horns on her head also charged at the enemy fiercely as her bright red iris locked on the opponent in sight.

Niklaus and Celine's yellow and red aura filled the battlefield respectively. And soon, their swords clashing against each other filled the battle arena with shrills.

Clang! Crang!

Swoosh! Bang!

Niklaus revealed to the whole empire why he was nicknamed as Black Flame.

The dual swordsman clad in black armor was an expert at using fire-related attacks, let it be small explosive swings or ground shattering burst attacks. And not only was he a full-fledged powerhouse himself but his fighting style was very direct and domineering.

Instead of focusing on defense.. He straight up overpowered Celine with his physical strength alone to the point where even the semi-saint rank swordswoman was forced to retreat a couple of times.

Celine on the other end was fast and her own aura blades created a shield made up of swords as a form of defense. Each one of these swords worked like a landmine when Niklaus attacked them head-on.

Unlike Veronica, Celine wasn't only fast but her single strike was enough to even put a semi-saint on backfoot.

She wasn't as fast as the Flash Goddess but by no means were her skills limited.

During the battle itself, Celine used at least 6 different techniques and finally managed to tire out Niklaus in a long half an hour arduous battle.

But Niklaus himself was no weakling either.

His multiple sword aura attacks made the battle ring appear like a site of volcano eruption as he himself was burning with intense heat leaking out of his armor fought with Celine as if his life was on the line.

Both the opponent were equally matched throughout the fight but in the end, Celine was forced to use her demonkin bloodline abilities and received a short boost in her strength and defeated Niklaus by stabbing through his abdomen in the last second.

And just like that, the dual sword saintess retained her name and reputation.

As for Kahn.. He was mostly taken aback by the sheer number of skills and combat techniques used by both sides.

He spoke in a cautious tone as he saw the hybrid demonkin semi-saint woman leaving the battle ring with a tired expression.

"I need to up my game.. Because the way things are.." he spoke with a worried expression and continued in an exasperated tone.

"I can't even win against this woman."

Chapter 289 - Creme De La Creme

Kahn was taken aback by the display of skills and power by Celine. By no means was she faster or more agile than Veronica. But the control over the aura that she used to create her aura blades and then even changing their shapes to different weapons was something Kahn hadn't even thought of before.

Niklaus was indeed on par with Veronica, just that he focused more on power than speed. So from Kahn's perspective, the match was indeed worthwhile.

This in a way, ended up encouraging Kahn to do better and fight fiercely in the semifinals. Because if he held off his hand against the semi-saints who had a plethora of skills and combat techniques at their disposal, his loss would be confirmed for sure.

With his eidetic memory, he remembered every single attacking move, defensive skill and even Celine's body movements when she attacked the opponent. So he wanted to prepare and look for countermeasures in case he had to face her in the next round.

So Kahn created a list of her attack patterns, her skills and her fighting style after carefully analyzing everything he saw in the match for future strategy. Although he knew it wasn't even her best, having at least enough knowledge was better than having nothing.

On the following day, the hype for the competition reached a new height that even Kahn hadn't dreamed of ever since the competition started.

The next match was one of the biggest highlights because of the two candidates who'd be fighting against each other.

Victor Apopis vs Ezekiel Nabi.

The chosen representative of the Demi-Human faction against the chosen representative of the Pureblood faction.

A semi-saint vs a semi-saint.

This was a match that the whole empire was looking forward to because both of them were renowned fighters of their respective factions but so far, no one had seen them in a full-front battle. Not even their peers from the younger generation.

So not only the common folks but all the factions were anticipating this match to see who was the stronger fighter. But what made this fight even more hyped was because of the former candidate.

Victor Apopis was a scythe user who was also the youngest yet the most talented son of the previous Emperor's Chosen, Darius Apopis who won this competition 50 years ago and was the current head of his clan.

His position in the Demi-Human faction was only second to the faction leader as he was a 6th stage saint spearman. And hence, most of the empire was looking to see him fight given how a legacy was involved with his name.

As per rumors, Victor defeated his opponent with a single swing of his weapon and severely injured them in the previous round. But since that match wasn't broadcasted throughout the empire, only those who attended it knew of his strength.

Ezekiel Nabi on the other hand.. No one knew anything about this candidate and his race or species because he kept his appearance hidden till this point.

All public knew was that he is an elemental mage and extremely powerful as well as talented at that.

Luckily for Kahn, one of his potential enemies will be taken out of here and he will face the winner in the semifinals. So he too attended this match while under the disguise of a snakekin noble heir.

When the match finally started... what Kahn saw was something that completely opened up a new world to him as far as magic was concerned.

Since he was studying magic and became an intermediate rank mage just a month ago himself, he saw an impeccable display of mana manipulation and perfect spell casting for the first time.

Ezekiel, who finally revealed his appearance and identity as a human mage to the empire cast 6 different elemental spells and attack skills.

He cast 2 additional elements compared to Solomon who cast only 4 element spells and AoE skills when Kahn fought him outside the flavot city. And the use of mana as well as its density in each of these elemental spells was highly condensed.

It even exceeded Kahn's current limits by 3 times when it came to casting magic spells. And that too after Kahn had inherited the Elven species bloodline specialty skills named Elemental Fusion and Elemental Transformation after eating Solomon's core.

Even so, he still won't be a match compared to Ezekiel even if they were to be of the same levels and rank.

The match was many times thrilling and far more entertaining compared to his own as half of the 1 kilometer wide battlefield was destroyed to pieces and only 30% portion remained in the one-hour-long battle.

And when the match came close to its end.. Kahn was left speechless while watching the match between these two monsters in their own ways fight like their life depended on it.

Victor, who was a halfbreed demonkin was actually the best among his siblings who could use their family's rumored True Demon bloodline and got a massive boost in attack and mana capacity for 10 minutes.

Since Kahn himself had the Berserk God Mode and possessed 5% of True Demon bloodline which he got from Dormammu.. He quickly noticed the changes in Victor's body.

There was nothing but pure untapped destructive power after he activated his bloodline effect and even the density of his aura strikes increased by at least 3 times.

Kahn too had these bloodline abilities but at best, they gave him a boost in strength only by one and half times. If he wanted to match with Victor, he'd have to absorb this True Demon bloodline to 100% and only he'd be able to face this opponent.

Only Berserk God Mode could help him stand against him but using that skill in this competition was a huge risk in itself because in everyone's eyes.. He was a normal human.

At the end.. Victor finally won the match and qualified for the semifinals as the last burst of power broke through Ezekiel's defenses and landed a critical wound which made the genius mage faint in the end like how Kahn defeated Veronica.

But one thing Kahn learned after watching these two matches.

Whether it was Celine, Victor or Ezekiel.. He was nowhere close to fighting them on even terms as a swordsman because they were simply too skilled.

If not for his Divine Abilities & the Blessings.. He wouldn't even be able to stand in the same room as these prodigies. And on top of that.. There were two more semi-saints he had yet to see fight.

His notion of facing these young geniuses as equals was broken today. Now, it almost seemed laughable.

Because these weren't just some glorified young masters or clan heirs who worked their way up because of their family background.

These were the true masters of their crafts.. They all were the...

Creme De La Creme.

Chapter 290 - The Honorable Guest

THE FOLLOWING DAY

Today, the next and the final match of the quarterfinals was to take place in one of the central districts of the capital.

And it was going to be a match between two genius females of the empire.

Kassandra Mikealson of the Neutral faction, a rumored prodigy and also the first one to breakthrough to semi-saint rank under the age of 30 in the past 20 years.

And her opponent Vinerma Pakshi, a 28-year-old female semi-saint Tengu archer who was nicknamed as the Flying Rainstorm.

Just like yesterday when Victor & Ezekiel's match happened, today's match also had the same hype towards the match.

And after today, there would be 10 days of resting period for all the combatants before the semifinals would officially begin.

As for Kahn who wanted to personally visit this match and gauge these opponents and their strengths as well as skills.. He had chosen not to go.

And the main reason being a guest who was personally coming to visit their manor. This persona was an entity that very few people in the whole Rakos empire had a chance to get a glimpse of.

Even other saints greatly feared this man given his title and strength. And as per rumors.. He was someone even the enemy empires avoided when it was a matter of full-scale war. In a way, the person who was visiting them today played as one of the pillars of the military defense of the whole empire.

Even those from the rival factions had a sense of respect towards this individual given the title he had earned.

The Emerald Swordsman, Stronoff Mikealson.

A fourth stage saint swordsman who was also called the number one swordsman of the empire.

And this grand figure who millions of people looked up to and wanted to get a glimpse had sent a messenger to Kahn's manor yesterday evening.

And thus, instead of going to watch the match, Kahn and Albestros chose to stay and prepare to welcome their honorable guest instead.

In the afternoon, the envoy of the Commander of the Mikealson clan finally came through a small flying ship and landed in the 5 acres green field of the area surrounding their manor.

Kahn sent a carriage to receive their guest and waited at the main entrance door of his manor to welcome the guest as a host.

A small group of 100 soldiers in white and blue battle gear that belonged to his side escorted the 21 individuals that came as part of the envoy.

And when the last and most luxurious carriage finally stopped at their door front, an enigmatic and kingly person donned in silver armor and an epic rank giantsword on his back appeared in front of the hosts.

Everyone including Kahn bowed in respect towards this grand figure who even the batch of saints he met in his company couldn't compare to even if they were to fight together, stood with a calm demeanor on his face.

"Greetings, your lordship. We humbly welcome you to my small abode. Please allow us to offer our hospitality." spoke Albestros like a true nobleman as he addressed the 2 kilometers wide and 3 kilometers long grand mansion that previously housed thousands of people of an entire clan as a 'small abode'.

Stronoff gazed at the manor and its architecture a bit and nodded in approval.

"Not bad. It's also built strategically to house many warriors and even has a training facility beneath the ground." spoke Stronoff in an appreciating tone.

[Bloody hell.. He can even sense the whole facility which is that deep in the ground? How strong is a fourth stage saint in reality?] wondered Kahn because this place was hard to detect even by peak grandmaster mages who were proficient in magic formations, arrays and mana sensitivity.

Yet the swordsman in front of him quickly found out about it with a single glance.

After all the pleasantries were done and Stronoff along with the 20 peak grandmasters varying from middle-aged to elderly warriors of different genders and species were escorted inside the manor.

A whole setup of a grand meeting was already prepared in the large hall of the manor that could hold a big party of thousands.

Fragrant refreshments and aromatic food were already ready to be served by the queues of professional servants and maids and all these individuals were seated on round tables of their own.

And obviously, Stronoff sat on the main table along with Albestros.

"Why are you not sitting with us?" asked the gray-haired middle-aged man with a short beard.

"Apologies, my lord. I do not qualify to sit at the same table as you." spoke Kahn in a courteous tone as he half bowed in front of the man who was the idol of hundreds of millions of people in the empire.

Stronoff chuckled and spoke in a friendly tone.

"There's no need to be so formal. One of the reasons I came here was actually to meet you in person."

"What?!" exclaimed Kahn in surprise.

But before the man could reply, Kahn spoke again hurriedly.

"If it's about the match I had with Lady Veronica, I wholeheartedly apologize for going that far."

This time, it was Stronoff and his group who were taken aback.

"Pfftt!!.. Ha ha!"

"Is that why you think I came here?" asked Stronoff as he and the other members of his envoy laughed.

"Then? What is it if I may ask?" asked Kahn with an intentionally created 'surprised' expression.

"We Mikealsons embrace even death as long as it is honorable.

You won the match fair and square. So you don't need to worry about that matter.

There are 3 reasons why I have come to meet you and master Albestros here." said Stronoff.

"What is it, sir Stronoff?" asked Albestros in his elderly and regal tone.

"Can I see your sword first?" he asked.

Kahn took out Lucifer and handed it to the saint.

He wasn't being cowardly in front of the powerful but he wasn't an idiot either to act aloof or high and mighty in front of a respectful person that was indeed worth admiring... and who could also kill him with a sneeze if provoked.

SHRILL!!

A loud shrill filled the entire hall as soon as Stronoff held Lucifer in his hands and started inspecting it.

"Blood-bind ritual. It is linked to your soul and cannot be used by anyone else even if you were to die." he spoke with a thoughtful expression.

"A true gem of work indeed, Master Albestros. Even other peak grandmaster blacksmiths I met have failed many times to perform this ritual successfully." he looked at the peak grandmaster blacksmith with eyes full of respect.

"If I'm not wrong.. It's made from the fangs of a drake. So it was indeed you who cleared that dungeon as suspected by our informants.

This indeed shows the level of your talent and strength." he said in an approving voice.

The next moment, both Kahn and Albestros were rooted on the spot. Their secret was already known to this man. It also showed that he had done thorough research on them beforehand.

"May I see the armor?" he asked.

However, Kahn shook his head and responded.

"Apologies, your lordship. But this is not a suitable place for it." he said without hesitation.

However, neither Stronoff nor his people felt offended by this refusal.

All of them were seasoned warriors who knew how to respect and care for their weapons and armors as if they were part of their own bodies.

Forcing Kahn to reveal it would be an unfitting act for people of their caliber.

As for why Kahn didn't want to reveal it.. Because it was one of his trump cards. And the man in front of him belonged to the side of one of the potential rivals in the competition.

"No problem. I hope to see it someday.

And if I'm not wrong.. That will be worth the wait." spoke Stronoff.

"As for the second reason.. I wanted to offer Master Albestros and his company to be one of our main suppliers for the armory of our clan.

I'm aware of your deals with the Vandereich clan and the pureblood faction but please know that we will not intervene in your business with them.

And also I give my word that regardless of the outcome of the Emperor's Chosen competition.. It shall not affect our agreement in any way." he said in a firm and chivalrous tone.

[I see.. So that's why he personally visited us.

This deal will surely be bigger than what we have going on with the pureblood faction since we're bigger and more prestigious now.] thought Kahn and gave Albestros an understanding gaze.

"And the 3rd is something I wanted to talk about in private. Just between the three of us." said Stronoff as he spoke in a serious tone.

There was no malice or authority in his words but both Kahn and Albestros quickly understood the gravity of the situation.

Even Kahn had anticipated what this third reason could be after they suddenly received the message yesterday.

He quickly took an epic-grade space domain artifact out of his space ring and activated it. All three of them, including the table, were isolated from the outside world in a second.

"What is the reason you speak of, your lordship?" asked Kahn in a respectful tone.

The next moment, Stronoff slightly revealed his aura. There was no suppression or threat in it but Kahn was shaken to his core as soon as he heard the words.

The fourth stage saint swordsman, the number one swordsman of the whole empire spoke in a majestic and domineering voice.

"I want you to join the Mikealson Clan!"