

Darkness 441

Chapter 441 - The Big Show

ONE WEEK LATER.

The new rumors and overly stretched stories that degraded Kahn kept coming in and spread among the masses of the entire Rakos Empire.

The public had been thoroughly brainwashed into thinking that Kahn was nothing but a ruthless and tyrannical ruler who showed his true colors after gaining power. And all his previous deeds were nothing but a pretense to appear as a kind and honorable sovereign.

But out of nowhere... a shocking video recording surfaced and spread through the entire empire in a single day.

In the Verlassen fiefdom, however...

"Hey, hey! Don't forget that it was also lord Victor who successfully attacked and broke through the line of defense in all four directions.

Otherwise, those mindless monsters wouldn't have been able to break through their formations easily. It would have taken a lot of time and maybe they would have managed to send a distress signal."

A voice reverberated around the crowd as the broadcast screens suddenly started across all the cities and towns. Instantly garnering the attention of the citizens who were going about their lives.

"That peasants like them live only to serve the powerful.

After this incident gets blown out of proportion... it won't even take a month before the government from the capital calls for official impeachment."

A face filled with contempt towards the commoner class appeared as the recordings carried on.

After a few minutes...

"The faction council and lord faction leader are indeed foresighted. They used his Savior of the Commoners act against himself.

This will be the perfect revenge against him for killing commander Aswala and defaming our Demi-Human faction."

Victor's voice resounded through the entire fiefdom.

This same scenario followed throughout the whole empire where this pre-recorded message was shared using projection artifacts. Every major street, populated zones, shops, restaurants, and even military forces stationed on all border regions of the empire were somehow shown the same thing by people who appeared out of nowhere.

And finally, after this conversation amongst the people in the recording ended... a face of a young man donned in black and gray attire suddenly appeared on the screens.

This person was the talk of the whole Rakos Empire for the last two weeks and probably was the most hated person during that time.

"People of the Verlassen fiefdom and every other citizen watching this recording across the Rakos Empire. I, Kahn Salvatore, would like to share the truth about the massacre of the soldiers that happened 15 days ago.

"As you can see... Victor Apopis of the Apopis clan, who was also sent by the Demi-Human faction under the pretext of gaining experience and helping the military of the fiefdom; has admitted that he is the one who instigated and carried on the massacre of the innocent soldiers who were only doing their duty to protect the borders.

And not only that... but how the Demi-Human faction along with their faction leader, Jeremiah Themis himself were the ones who conspired this whole plan." spoke Kahn with a somber expression.

"They brutally and heartlessly murdered the brave and honorable soldiers of the military who were only carrying their duties just for the sake of bringing down my name and reputation.

To quell their hatred against me... they ordered a massacre of our innocent warriors who have families, parents and friends but chose to give their lives for protecting our great empire." the more he talked, the heavier his tone became.

"These are the men and women who are the main reason why you can sleep silently at night. Yet, in order to gain political advantage and defame me so they could take over the Verlassen fiefdom and get control of its resources...

The Demi-Human committed the biggest taboo of them all." said Kahn with a saddened expression as if he was shaken by this loss.

"As of now... Victor Apopis has fled the Berawaa region and we are tracking his whereabouts.

And all those people in the recording have been confirmed to be the members of many clans of the Demi-Human faction itself." he revealed.

"My power and authority are limited. I can not even ask for fair justice for all of my fallen soldiers since the system of the empire is controlled by the three factions.

I will do what I must to avenge my people." spoke Kahn in a domineering and vengeful tone.

"As for those who doubted me, vilified me and spread fake rumors about me... you can guess who was behind it all.

So I'm not even going to justify myself.

It's a great shame that the fiefdom and the empire I have devoted my life to... was easily swayed and believed whatever lies that fell on their ears.

It's not me who failed the people... it's the citizens of the fiefdom and the rest of the empire who have failed me." spoke Kahn with a dejected face as if he was greatly wronged.

His crestfallen face instantly touched the emotions of every person watching the recording. And a sudden wave of guilt and disappointment about themselves spread across the entire population of the empire.

Billions of people who saw the truth behind the massacre which had become the center of their attention over the past two weeks felt like they were nothing but fools who jumped to conclusions and labeled Kahn as a heartless and cruel tyrant who was the personification of lies and deceit.

Only now did they find out that they were lied to since the very beginning and instead of blaming the real culprits... they blamed the one person who actually cared about the lives of commoners and soldiers alike.

On the other hand... the military soldiers across the entire empire were furious.

Their gazes were filled with absolute hatred and millions of vengeful expressions appeared amongst their ranks.

This was too much!

Their lives were treated like ants by the rich and powerful and slaughtered just so the mighty could gain money, resources and control over a piece of land of the empire.

While everyone felt like the Demi-Human faction had crossed the limit and should be held responsible for their crimes...

They also saw the face of a man. Who was wronged by them and yet he chose to fight for truth and justice.

At this moment... this wasn't just Kahn's war.

And neither did he stand alone. Rather... he had the support of the strongest force of the whole empire...

The People!

Chapter 442 - Public Defamation

After Kahn's recording regarding the truth of the massacre spread 3 days ago... the entire Rakos Empire went into an uproar. Public marches, rallies, and campaigns against the Demi-Human faction took a violent turn.

The government that was composed of the top 3 noble factions and their members holding important positions in every sector had their hands filled with work.

Kahn's act of vengeance without even directly picking a fight against the Demi-Human faction had instigated a headache that none had a remedy of.

No matter what they did or tried to cover up the matter... The public outrage as well as the military itself kept rising to an extent where a Civil War seemed imminent.

But the situation for the faction in question was worse than anyone could hope.

Their collective businesses of all the clans, number of employees, properties, shares, their market reputation, and even the support of subsidiary clans kept falling to the point that the once-powerful faction of the Rakos Empire was entirely shunned by the people.

With each passing day, many people who did not want to have their name attached or wanted to detach themselves from this faction broke their ties on the accord of moral and ethical values.

Victor's confession along with the other members of their faction played a detrimental part as he, the once known as the representative of the Demi-Human faction during the Emperor's Chosen competition, had basically verified the truth.

On the other hand, this presented the perfect opportunity for the Pureblood & Neutral factions at the same time. This was by far the biggest opportunity they had to cause the downfall of this faction in the past hundred years ever since the Great War and coup against the Imperial family.

In the never-ending power struggle, Kahn created the best opening for them and without even a second thought, they started to ostracize everyone and everything related to the Demi-Human faction.

Soon, they too entered the fray and dedicated their forces and resources to bring down their opponent they wanted to bite a piece off of for decades.

With this, the tables were turned on the Demi-Human faction by Kahn, who didn't even lift a finger and used their own weapon to cut off their hands and feet.

BANG!!

A clenched fist banged on a round table inside the ginormous castle.

"Your son ruined our faction's name again.

Now, how the hell are we supposed to recover from this?!

He even mentioned mine and the Faction council's name!

That blabbermouth has ruined all of us!

This can only be covered up with blood."

Shouted an old elven mage aka the faction leader of the Demi-Human faction, Jeremiah Themis.

"And you!" he looked at a white bearkin who sat across the table.

"The faction council agreed to your proposition because you have been pressuring all of us to avenge your brother.

Now tell me, will you take the responsibility?" asked Jeremiah to the bearkin.

The one who sat across the table was none other than the elder brother of Commander Aswala, and the current clan leader of the Bhaloo clan.

"Infuriating! This is too infuriating!

Only if I could go there... I would've killed the Salvatore bastard with my own hands..." spoke the elf as he grasped his head in frustration and pulled his hair.

"I shouldn't have listened to any of you!" he shouted.

While the big powerhouses were having their version of Clash of Clans...

Kahn had announced a fiefdom wide curfew. No one was allowed to leave or enter Verlassen fiefdom in the name of searching for Victor and his accomplices.

But in reality... he already had all those people imprisoned. The main reason he was putting up this act was to gain an absolute advantage over the enemy side.

Because using these people, he could find all the connected invaders who spread rumors about him. Also, those who were planted as spies in government and military alike answered to these people.

So Kahn intended to use the big fish and catch the small prawns in order to clean his turf from possible espionage.

Ronin was left in charge of torturing those people. And make use of covenant soldiers and the other generals to arrest the people of the Demi-Human faction. In the past 3 days, they had caught over 40 thousand of these spies already.

Yet the more the caught, the more spies were revealed. Which made Kahn focus his attention on purifying his fiefdom first.

As for the main figureheads... he planned to bring them out in the People's Court.

To say that they helped Victor escape under the orders of their faction.

So this way, Kahn would publicly defame the Demi-Human faction rightfully.

Just yesterday, he had requested the central government to investigate the matter and search the properties owned by the faction under the pretext of them still hiding Victor even now.

Which eventually, turned into a godsend opportunity for Pureblood and Neutral Faction to fuck up the entire Demi-Human faction even more legally since the people of the empire and military alike were filled with anger.

Compared to him, the two factions were far more powerful, resourceful and deadlier as enemies.

Kahn would let the big guys fight among themselves while he sits and comfortably watches the whole show while eating popcorn.

Finally, even without directly wielding a weapon, he doomed the whole faction filled with Saints who had godly strength and authority.

And as for Victor...

Tap!

Tap!

In a closed-off and heavily fortified room under Kahn's castle...

A trio of three people walked in.

Kahn, Jugram, and Armin entered this room filled with types of equipment made for torturing people.

He took a seat on a wooden chair and looked at the chained man who had one horn coming out of his head.

"Wakey, wakey... little devil!" chimed Kahn with a smile on his face.

"Urghh... you think this little suppression formation and these chains are enough to make me talk?

You'll turn into dead meat soon, Salvatore!" exclaimed Victor as he gave Kahn a furious gaze.

Kahn on the other hand seemed unbothered and spoke.

"Don't get your hopes up. As a matter of fact... I'm finally free to watch an entertaining show." he said and then asked with an insidious grin.

"So tell me, Victor... Are you ready to repent?"

Chapter 443 - Last Opportunity

25 kilometers outside the capital Aesir on the night of the same day... A warship landed amidst a mountainous region filled with dense treelines and grasslands.

Tchak!

The giant main door of this two hundred meters tall and four hundred meters wide massive warship opened and a group of people exited the ship.

These were none other than Kahn, Jugram, Armin, and the elite fighters amongst the covenant soldiers.

Shing!

Cling!

A demonkin who was tied with heavy mythrill chains that also had multiple runes which stopped him from using his mana or aura.

Soon, they stopped in an open ground while the soldiers brought a black and red wooden throne with comfortable cushions.

"What the hell is this supposed to mean, Salvatore?! Do you think you can secretly execute me and get away with it?!"

Don't you know who I am or which faction I represent?

The entire Demi-Human faction and my clan will cause a bloodbath in this shithole of a fiefdom of yours if you kill me!" exclaimed Victor angrily as he shirked his hands away from a soldier who was holding the chains.

"Arshhh... this fucking dimwit." spoke Kahn in annoyance as he took a seat.

"You still don't get it? You're no longer some heir of a clan or a young prodigy of a noble faction.

You are... a fugitive!" he said and looked down on chained Victor.

"You're now the whistle-blower in the eyes of the Demi-Human faction.

Forget the faction... even your own family won't protect you at this point. You have become...

A liability." smirked Kahn with an elated expression.

"There are two reasons why I spread the news that you escaped from my clutches.

One...

If I did anything to you myself... it could've been turned to my disadvantage. Your faction or the clan would've come up with any reason in order to get custody over you.

If I declined, they could say that I actually orchestrated that confession and wanted to silence you or any random bullshit reason that people would eventually believe.

Because if a thousand people speak a lie together... it becomes the truth." revealed Kahn.

"And as things stand... Instead of trying to protect you...

It's more convenient for your faction to get rid of you.

If you're dead... they can shift the entire blame on you.

But if nobody knows where you are... the entire empire will think that your faction and clan are protecting you despite your crimes.

So keeping you alive will do far more damage than killing you." he said.

The next moment, his tone turned grim.

"Two...[Updated from didn't kill you because death will be a great mercy for a scumbag like you who thinks that other people's lives don't matter since you come from a noble family and prestigious background.

I bet you didn't even feel a sense of wrong or responsibility when you carried out the massacre.

I'm certain you have no remorse for causing the deaths of those twenty thousand innocent people who were only doing their job." he said while leaking his killing intent.

"As the Sovereign, I'm responsible to protect the people here.

I know that I'm no saint and have blood on my hands as well. But what I absolutely hate is when someone innocent dies because of me.

And to frame me... your faction killed so many people. Since I don't have the power and authority to go and kill that fucking faction leader of yours...

I'll at least make you pay for the crimes you've committed." said Kahn with eyes full of bloodlust while his black and red aura froze the surrounding area.

"So for all those deaths... you should pay a heavy price.

There were 20 thousand dead people...

Let's see if you still want to live if your bones are broken for the same amount." declared Kahn with a vengeful tone.

He then looked at Jugram and Armin who came with him to this isolated region.

Under Jugram's orders, all the soldiers returned to the warship and waited there.

BOOM!!

Kahn, who sat on his throne with a grim expression suddenly activated the Dimensional Domain skill. One of his trump card abilities.

"What... what the hell is this?!" exclaimed Victor as he noticed the remaining strength in his body leaving and even standing up took a great deal of effort for him.

"Ah, I guess you didn't notice it back then since I cast it too quickly. This.... Is my domain." spoke Kahn casually.

Victor on the other hand... has a frightened expression as soon as he heard Kahn's response.

"Impossible! How can you have a domain? Only a 5th stage saint and above can create a domain of their own!" exclaimed Victor hurriedly.

"Oh, that's something I never heard of." spoke Kahn as he learned about this key information for the first time.

But instead of giving too much attention to this revelation, Kahn looked at Jugram who was clad in his new red armor and giantsword made from the skin and bones of the legendary rank Invimarak monster.

"Master... Both of our strengths are now matched when I'm in my human form." spoke Jugram.

"Human form what?..." said Victor.

But instead of clarifying...

Clang!

Kahn suddenly summoned a weapon and threw it toward Victor.

This was actually Victor's scythe that they confiscated back when Kahn and Jugram caught him.

"You see... I'm a very benevolent man.

I will give you one last chance if you want to save your life.

Fight my general here in a life and death battle.

If you manage to kill him... I'll let you go free.

How does that sound?" asked Kahn with a sinister voice.

Spat!

Victor spat on the ground while Jugram unchained him.

The next moment, he took out Victor's repaired armor from his space ring.

"Don't fucking look down on me you bastard!

Last time I was defeated because you had trapped me. But this time... I'll kill him first and then I'll kill you later.

Dare to bet?" scoffed Victor.

Kahn only nodded in return. This inwardly laughed at the clan heir of the Apopis clan who still hadn't grasped the situation.

After Victor equipped his gear... he stood in front of Jugram. Both of them were now limited to a peak grandmaster under Kahn's dimensional domain.

Kahn sat on the farthest end while Armin accompanied him.

And finally... he gave the command.

"Begin the Deathmatch!"

Chapter 444 - The Atonement

In the middle of a dense forest, on an open ground... a heated battle began between two powerful fighters. Shockwaves and tremors filled the battlefield as a demonkin and a three-meter-tall human clad in red armor fought in a deathmatch.

While the former was faster and more flexible because of his fighting style with a scythe... the latter was powerful and more perceptive of the battlefield as both entities fought.

Clang!

Clink!

Sparks flew across the battlefield as Victor's scythe clashed against Jugram's new giantsword and was repelled after the clash.

Swoosh!

Victor's figure flickered and he evaded Jugram's vision.

Shing!

Just then, Jugram used the broad side of the sword and quickly plunged it into the ground on his right-hand side.

Clang!

Victor, who just appeared a second later in that same place had already swung his scythe in order to take off Jugram's right arm and both of their weapons clashed.

[Nonsense! It hasn't even been a minute and he can already predict my next attack.

Even for a human who is under 40, he is far more experienced.] thought the demonkin.

As soon as their battle started, Jugram went into a defensive mode and allowed Victor to attack. But in just a minute, he was already predicting Victor's next location based on the latter's footwork like a true veteran.

Kahn, who was seated on his throne, chuckled as if this was something bound to him.

[This fool doesn't even know who he's fighting.

Although Ceril and Omega are the most relentless among my forces when it comes to training their skills and abilities...

No one has ever been able to surpass Jugram when it comes to adapting to the battlefield and his opponent.

He's the fastest and most efficient one to find flaws in his enemies and their techniques.] thought Kahn.

All the generals and Omega had inherited a part of Kahn's personality in their own way. And Jugram was the one who inherited Kahn's quick wit and adaptability to completely turn the tide in a battle.

Like a simulation running inside his head... Jugram only needed a few exchanges to gauge the opponent's skills and their strength.

And now that the battlefield was even under Kahn's dimensional domain which brought Victor's strength on the same level as Jugram... it was more about the real experience on a battlefield.

Compared to Victor, Jugram had more real-life battle experience than the enemy because unlike the demonkin who only trained under the care of his clan and factions... Jugram on the other end fought every battle in a do-or-die situation.

Even Kahn considered him as the One man army because Jugram had the skills and mindset to even fight a couple of thousand enemies regardless of their strengths and numbers.

His previous battle against the frost giants when Kahn went to The North was already a testament to how great of a battle-hard warrior Jugram was.

In a way, the match was already fixed and Victor didn't even know it.

As for the main reason why he said that he'd let Victor go...

He didn't intend to let Victor go with his sanity intact after what he did.

First, he wanted to psychologically break Victor who thought that he was above other people and their lives didn't matter because they came from a poor background or part of the society.

Physical pain was already due... but Kahn wanted to make this bastard realize how little did his heritage, his clan and the so-called fake prestige mattered in the end when no one was coming to save him.

And as the battle continued while Victor used skills after skills by infusing his man with his scythe attacks and created a few dozen copies of the weapon using his aura...

Jugram successfully defended against them from time to time and after 10 minutes passed...

He finally used his power boost skills such as Inferno Domain and Demon's Rage skill to overpower the opponent.

And in just 15 minutes... the once presumed to be the 3rdmost strongest prodigy of the Rakos Empire was reduced to a punching bag by the Hell Berserker general.

"Arrhhh!!" wailed Victor as Jugram kicked Victor and broke his left shin with a single kick.

And he dislocated Victor's right shoulder with a single punch. At this point... he wasn't even using his giantsword but only his bare fists.

And with his epic rank weapon that was shattered in half by Jugram out of the equation...

Victor couldn't even properly defend himself and charged like an idiot in front of his enemy.

"Tch! Such a disappointment. He doesn't even know any other fighting techniques other than his scythe skills. Hasn't he heard the saying....

A jack of all trades is a master of none, but oftentimes better than a master of one." spoke Kahn as he enjoyed a glass of wine while Victor screamed in pain.

"Go heal him. We are going to take time on this one." ordered Kahn to Armin.

Armin healed Victor's shattered bones instantly now that he was a legendary rank being and had plenty of SSS Rank healing skills. keep shattering his bones while Armin keeps healing him instantly.

"No!! Stop!!!" pleaded Victor but Jugram shattered his wrist and all the bones in the hand under his feet.

Soon, a vicious cycle of Jugram breaking bones after bones in Victor's body repeated while Armin kept healing him without even breaking a sweat.

Kahn had already left a doppelganger in his castle who was Kahn himself and shared the affairs as the Sovereign of the fiefdom through the Telepathy Link.

So all he did in the meantime was to watch Victor suffer while he himself was counting the number of broken bones.

TWO DAYS LATER.

Kahn had been having a great time as he saw Jugram break Victor's pride till the point the semi-saint started to beg to let him live.

And finally... a figure of this once overly prideful demonkin with hopeless eyes lay on the ground as Jugram ripped apart his left arm.

"And that is number 20 thousand! Hurray!

Congratulations Victor! You've survived the punishment." spoke Kahn with a charming smile as he clapped excitedly.

Meanwhile, Victor couldn't even scream in agony at this point.

"Plea.. se.. j.. ust.. ki.. ll... me." spoke Victor who was completely broken at this point.

He had suffered an immeasurable amount of torture and heartwrenching pain in the past 2 days at the hands of Kahn's executioner aka Jugram.

"My my... did you really think I'd let you die so easily?

If you want a swift death... you should offer me something compelling.

After all, you're more worth alive to me than dead." spoke Kahn in a casual tone.

"What.... do.. you... want?" asked Victor.

"Isn't it obvious?" said Kahn and revealed his terms...

"The real truth."

Chapter 445 - Cruel Fate

Kahn looked Victor straight in the eyes and asked the real reason behind the whole outrageous act of the Demi-Human faction by massacring thousands of soldiers.

Although their main intention was just to get him publicly defamed and overthrow his rule... Kahn had many suspicions of his own.

Because the faction filled with millions of people and Saints who lived for more than a century acted impatiently. By no means did he believe that a faction full of wise and cunning people would act so suddenly without foolproof and extensive planning first.

But they still ended up making the mistake as if there was a time margin they had to meet because even the smartest people make mistakes when they're desperate.

This was the main reason why Kahn believed that what he found out before capturing Victor was only a half-truth. That there was more than met the eye.

Victor, who was mentally broken at this moment after going through the soul-shivering experience of having all of his bones broken and flesh squashed over and over again for the past 2 days... had an aghast expression.

Despite going through all that torment... he still didn't think that Kahn could actually see through and ask for the second reason.

"How did you... how did you know?" he asked as he panted heavily.

"You should know better that I didn't become who I am today without using my brain.

Well, I don't have time. Tell me now or this torture will continue and forget about it stopping anytime soon." replied Kahn as he gave a final intimation.

Victor on the other end had an ashen expression as soon as he heard Kahn's warning.

At this point... he wasn't worried about dying but suffering through that cycle of immeasurable pain again and again. Because each time... he was losing his sanity and wanted this torture to end.

"To... to keep you busy." spoke Victor as he had bare minimum strength just to speak.

"What?!" asked Kahn with a befuddled expression.

"Our Demi-Human faction wanted to not only takeover Verlassen but also keep you busy so that you couldn't visit that place which will be opened in 2 months from now." revealed Victor.

"So that we have fewer candidates entering that zone.

That way, I would have the chance to complete the task.

The lesser, the better." he iterated.

"After this incident... the faction had planned to summon you to the capital and convict you under false charges in order to keep you busy till the time limit finished." explained the demonkin.

Shock!

Kahn had nothing but a perplexed countenance as Victor revealed the other side of the truth.

[What the fuck?! This doesn't make any sense!] Kahn thought as he could swallow this new revelation.

"Just for that... your faction didn't mind having 20 thousand people getting killed?

What exactly is in that place?!" he asked.

Victor spoke with a fatigued expression.

"Even I don't know the complete truth. All I know is that it had something to do with the Imperial family and this invisible barrier that stops the Saints from entering this fiefdom is actually just an outer layer.

My father once told me that the primary and stronger barriers are inside that zone. Protecting something that's not allowed to be spoken about.

Only the three faction leaders and the clan leaders of the main three clans of respective factions know the truth." he said.

"But isn't your clan one of the three top clans of the Demi-Human faction?" asked Kahn.

"Yes... but after you defeated me in the Emperor's Chosen competition... I lost the right to know the hidden truth." spoke Victor as his figure slouched in defeat.

[What the hell is so important that they went as far as setting up the whole competition just to get an advantage to select a fiefdom of their choosing.

And now even massacred thousands of innocent people just to stop me from entering?

Are they certain that somehow I will complete the said task?] thought Kahn.

[Other than the history of the previous Hero of Lightning dying there... I don't know anything about that area.

Even that Allister as well as Ismaetrazel only gave me vague information and the Pureblood faction hasn't given me proper details about exactly what I have to do there even at this point.

The more I see it... the more complicated things are being revealed.] he concluded.

Victor then got on his knees in a pleading position and spoke...

"Look... I've told you everything I know. So please... just kill me. I can't go through it anymore."

His defeated and hoarse voice resounded inside the 1 kilometer radius of Kahn's dimensional domain.

From the outside, this massive black dome-like domain barrier sized only 200 meters but this skill that came with his Dimensional Law divine ability was five times bigger from the inside.

And now, Kahn decided that it was time he stopped playing the torture game.

"Well... your fate lies in not my hands but his." said Kahn as he pointed his forefinger towards the berserker general in red armor.

A shiver ran under Victor's spine as he looked at Jugram again.

It was this very man who had been torturing him without a break for the past two days.

Even his face looked that of a grim reaper to Victor now.

"I want to continue this. But you have something that I desperately want." spoke Jugram as he flexed his arms and neck.

"What?.." asked Victor with a puzzled expression.

"Your bloodline." he said.

"What do you mean?" asked Victor with a confused expression.

"Bloodline isn't something that can be acquired just from someone's body." he said.

But before he could ask any questions...

BOOM!

A loud shockwave full of fire and a chaotic aura suddenly erupted.

Bang!

Thud!

Victor's body was thrown 20 meters away from the shockwaves.

And finally, beside Kahn and Armin... a massive 12 meter tall figure of a monstrous humanoid creature whose body was filled with bone-like armor over his shoulders, arms and legs while the rest of the body had black and red flesh as if a never-ending blistering heat ran under the flesh.

The temperature of the surrounding suddenly rose by at least 10 degrees as Jugram finally took his real Chaos Demon form.

Thud!

Thud!

Victor was rooted on the spot, completely bewildered and out of wits as he suddenly saw this demonic creature appearing out of nowhere.

"What the hell are you? How come a monster like this is here?!" he exclaimed in fear.

He then looked at Kahn and Armin, both of whom did not seem surprised at all.

"Who are you? This shouldn't even be possible!" he asked in a jittery voice as his entire body shivered under Jugram's terrifying aura.

Kahn gleefully replied...

"I'm just your friendly neighborhood Hero of Darkness."

He said and took a sip of wine.

Shocked!

Victor was completely bewildered.

"A hero... you... you're one of them!" shouted Victor as he finally came to a realization.

Although in Rakos Empire, news and knowledge about Gods, their churches, and even the chosen Heroes were forbidden... the top brass knew of their existence.

Only now did he realize that Kahn wasn't someone without a background. Rather... he was not from this world from the beginning.

He was one of the rumored Heroes that even Victor thought of as nothing but myths. And these so-called Heroes only existed in other empires but were never found in Rakos since the time of its founding.

And Victor had made an enemy out of the biggest misfortunes of this world.

Among the three noble factions and their younger generation... he was seen as a prodigy. But in front of Kahn...

Victor realized that he wasn't even a stepping stone.

"Impossible... this is not possible..." Victor spoke to himself as he tried to deny the reality in front of him.

Thud!

Thud!

Jugram's loud steps resounded as the giant Hell Berserker kept looking at puny semi-saint demonkin who was no different than a defenseless newborn in front of him.

A stream of tears dropped from Victor's eyes as he came to accept his fate... no longer having even the slightest will to live or put up any resistance.

"Be proud of yourself. Even without knowing... you have proved yourself useful to my master." said Jugram in a domineering and grim voice.

And instead of giving the halfbreed demonkin a chance to respond...

Step!

Crack!!

Jugram stepped on Victor's chest and crushed his entire torso under his massive feet.

Splurt!

Like a squashed tomato... blood and intensities spread on the soiled ground and Jugram lifted his feet.

He looked down on the tiny opponent. Half of Victor's body was turned into meat paste and only a head with a horrified expression came into his sight.

Using his blood-controlling skill, he pulled up the gray core of the semi-saint Victor Apopis.

Thud!

Thud!

He walked back and kneeled in front of Kahn as he presented him with Victor's core.

But instead, Kahn got up from his throne and walked toward Victor's corpse, and placed his hands on the bleeding and mangled corpse.

"Absorb!"

He spent a few hours absorbing Victor's skills and bloodlines.

But when it came to the semi-saint's core... he looked at Jugram who had reverted to his human form.

"Although it looks very compelling... I can't level up again until my soul is completely healed. Besides..." said Kahn as he gave a content smile to the general.

"This will benefit you more than me."

Chapter 446 - King of Fire

In the middle of the open ground inside this forested region. Kahn began the synthesis procedure and both Jugram and Victor's bodies were covered under a pitch-black shadow.

"System, show me the new abilities." ordered Kahn.

[Congratulations to the host for acquiring the following abilities & skills :

Scythe Blade Barrage (SS Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to make consecutive attacks made of scythe blades using mana and aura.

Demon's Aura (SS Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to exude a demonic suppressive aura to put all enemies within one kilometer range in a fearful state.

Congratulations to the Host!

This ability has been merged under War Dominance Blessing!

War Dominance has reached Stage 5!

Scythe Shredder (SS Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to create a 50-meter-wide storm of aura blade storm filled with scythe-shaped weapons.

Any target of this attack will receive multiple lacerations and bleeding effects.

True Demon Transformation (SSS Rank) :

Allows the host to temporarily turn into a True Demon for 30 minutes.

In this form, all the physical stats and elemental attributes are increased by three times.

Note : The Host will be in a weakened state for 2 days after the activation time ends.

True Demon Bloodline absorbed!

Bloodline purity : 46%

Note : The Host is advised to find higher-grade specimens and absorb more bloodline to improve the buff effects of the Asura Mode.

There are currently no abilities or skills that can be merged with the newly gained ones.] reported system.

"Good. At least he was somewhat good.

Even though he wasn't a veteran like commander Aswala, he still had decent skills." spoke Kahn with a content expression.

Because after a long time, War Dominance was upgraded and the True Demon Transformation seemed to be a good skill with a lot of potential that he could use in the future without relying on Berserk God Mode.

Currently, it had too much recuperating period that his blessing that was given by the War Deity. But the potential was hard to ignore.

And as the system informed, gaining more True Demon bloodline would help his Asura Mode in order to get additional stats and attack buffs.

So Victor had indeed offered something unique to Kahn.

SIX HOURS LATER

The night had fallen already and the synthesis divine ability finally finished its work and the system notified Kahn.

But as soon as the notification ended, Kahn felt a dreary aura and his entire body froze under a horrifying and chaotic aura.

[Armin!] ordered Kahn.

Armin, who was at legendary rank and could stand under this pressure without getting affected, cast a protection barrier over both their bodies.

CRACK!!

CRACK!!

But suddenly, the ground cracked open and a massive burst of hellfire arose.

BOOM!!

As if an active volcano erupted, an ear-deafening noise filled the two kilometers region while this enormous pillar of fire rose high in the night and lit up the dark forest like a gigantic torch.

Thud!

Shatter!

The cracked ground trembled and earthquakes filled the two kilometer radius.

Kahn and Armin already stood 2 kilometers away from this massive crevice that engulfed the ground they previously stood on.

BANG!

And out of the ground that was literally on fire... two massive burning red claws ascended.

Dhang!

Crack!

Two enormous horns on fire, a massive demonic face with red eyes, ripped and muscular arms that had an exterior layer like a boney armor came to be.

BOOM!!

Another loud noise filled the region as hundreds of burning boulders were launched in the air through this 200 meter wide crevice.

Everywhere these fiery boulders fell, the trees and grass quickly caught fire which soon spread across their surrounding treelines.

Thud!!

Thud!!

Two massive feet landed on the ground as an enormous figure jumped out of this pit of fire and magma.

RRRAAAWWRRRRR!!!

A loud roar that sent shockwaves and sonic booms in the 3 kilometers radius resounded as if a terrifying monster arose from the pits of hell.

The entire plant life, trees, and grasslands in the two kilometer radius area started burning because of the extensive heat that arose from this hell creature.

Kahn was flabbergasted on the spot as well.

Because in front of him stood a 500 meters tall and 200 meters wide demonic creature whose entire body was covered in black bone-like armor over the shoulders, arms, chest, legs and the back, while the rest was nothing but fire running underneath its skin.

Jugram in his new form looked like an ancient demonic being that shouldn't have been released from hell.

"Bloody hell..." spoke Kahn.

[System, give me the report.] he commanded.

[Congratulations to the host. The subordinate Jugram has invoked a Legendary Class!

The subordinate has evolved into a variant legendary rank creature.

Following are the statistics and abilities :

Name : Jugram

Species : Diablos (Variant Superior Chaos Demon)

Job : Hellblazer (Legendary Rank)

Rank : Legendary Rank

Level : 240

Strength : 19460

Agility : 15942

Dexterity : 12693

Defense : 10489

Mana : 6863

Following are the newly gained abilities and skills :

King of Fire (Saint Rank) (Passive) :

The subordinate is now immune to all types of fire attribute attacks and will absorb such spells and attacks in order to turn them into his physical attributes and increase his stats.

The maximum rise in stats can be up to 500%.

Marauder King (SSS Rank)

Wrath of Vajra (SSS Rank)

Following are the upgraded abilities & skills :

Frenzy Berserker (SSS Rank) (Active) :

The subordinate can enter a frenzied state for 40 minutes during which, the strength and defense stats will be raised by 300% while the attack damage will increase by 600%.

Note : The duration and boost in this ability can be raised with the increase in levels and rank.

Rage Demon (SSS Rank) (Active) :

The subordinate will enter a Rage mode where all of his physical and magical skills will be multiplied by 800% for 15 minutes.

Note : The subordinate will enter a weakened state for 2 hours after this ability is deactivated.]

While the system carried out the list of abilities... Kahn's eyes were wide open while his jaw dropped on the ground as he listened to the list of the remaining abilities and skills.

Kahn, who was both terrified and also exhilarated at the same time shouted...

"Holy mother of Satan!"

Chapter 447 - The Hellblazer

Kahn had plenty of complicated expressions at this moment. Because he didn't expect this new transformation to come out as the result of Synthesis divine ability at all.

At best, he hoped to see Jugram become a legendary rank creature with barely meeting the mark. And even his legendary rank form was expected to be double his size or similar to Ceril or Armin's size at most.

But the final result was far superior. And the only thing he could point his fingers at was the True Demon bloodline.

Because to cause such a drastic transformation, they needed a very superior bloodline just like Rudra, Blackwall and Oliver now possessed.

So far, Kahn barely had any idea about this bloodline because it was extremely rare even in Rakos Empire. And he had no detailed knowledge about its heritage either.

Finally after a minute... he calmed his mind and continued going through the list.

[The skill named Inferno Domain has ranked up and evolved into a new ability.

Hell Domain (Saint Rank) (Active) :

The subordinate can create a 5 kilometers wide battlefield filled with Hellfire. All the enemies in this field will have their strength and defense reduced by 75%.

Note : The effective range of this ability will increase with the increase in levels and rank.

Blood Storm (SSS Rank) (Passive) :

The subordinate can drain out the blood from dead beings during a battle and use it as a high-pressure blood storm for 2 kilometers.

The subordinate can create any form of weapons using the blood by mixing his aura and world energy.

Chaos Emperor (Saint Rank) (Passive) :

The more enemies the subordinate kills and their blood is absorbed by him in a 5 kilometer radius... the more strength, defense and attack buff will be gained by the subordinate over time.

Note : The effective range and the buff received will increase with the rise in levels and rank.

The maximum buff that can be received is 900%.

Hellblazer Legendary Rank Class effects :

The subordinate has now become an entity of Hell.

The temperature of the surrounding 5 kilometers will be raised to 500 degree Celsius when the subordinate is in his true form.

Only the host and fellow subordinates will be immune to this blistering heat.

The defensive properties of all the armors, weapons and artifacts from the enemy side will be decreased by 50%.

Under the influence of the Hell Domain, unless the weapons and armors contain ice attributes and elemental properties... they will start melting after a few minutes.

The lower the quality of material and heat resistance, the faster they will melt.

The same applies to enemies and species with less heat resistance in their bodies.

In other words, the subordinate named Jugram can simply roast his enemies alive and melt their equipment just by bringing them inside his Hell Domain.

This content is taken from .com

Bloodline : True Demon

Current bloodline purity : 57%

Note : The Host is advised to merge more fire elemental creatures and specimens with a higher purity of the True Demon bloodline with the general named Jugram.] reported the system.

Kahn was left speechless again. Because the more he saw it... the more obvious fact came to his realization that Jugram himself became a natural disaster.

He was like a walking-talking personification of hell. And any enemy of his was bound to be burnt alive before they even touched him.

King of Fire skill was already like a cheat code that made him immune to all fire elemental attacks and skills whether they were physical or magical.

Hell Domain was literally his own battlefield just like how Kahn had Dimensional Domain skill. And the terrain inside this five kilometer wide domain was only advantageous to Jugram.

Because the temperature inside this domain would reach 500 degree Celcius. A temperature not many would be able to withstand because even a peak grandmaster would barely be able to protect themselves using all of their aura and mana for 10 minutes at best.

As for a semi-saint, they'd have 30 minutes and a Saint of the same rank who had access to world energy, they'd be able to endure it for an hour and a half at best.

But anyone below these... well, there would feel like standing in a fiery pit inside this domain where even the air was trying to burn them alive.

And given the 5 kilometers radius range... if Jugram revealed his true form on a battlefield...

Forget ten thousand... even a hundred thousand soldiers would fall in a dozen minutes.

Plus Chaos Emperor skill gave Jugram an unbelievable boost in Strength, Defense stats along with an Attack buff up to 900%, making him 9 times stronger at his peak...

Made him able to fight a 2nd stage Saint on even grounds given the difference in the strength with every rising stage.

On top of it... if they fought inside his HELL Domain... even defeating such an opponent wouldn't become a hassle as the enemy's stats and physical attributes would be reduced by 75% as well as all of their armors and weapons would lose 50% of their in-built durability.

In simple words... Jugram in his peak after using all of his skills was already on par with a 3rd stage Saint rank being.

If Kahn ever sent Jugram against an enemy force... millions will fall and nothing but a burning battlefield would remain in his wake.

It was like releasing a Demon Lord on weak enemies.

"Ha ha ha!!

Haha! Hahaha hahaha!!" laughed Kahn hysterically as small tears of joy dropped from his eyes.

In terms of strength and attack buffs, Jugram was the strongest among them all. He even surpassed Blackwall, who was a being called Kronos, a variant primordial titan.

And he was 2nd strongest amongst in Defense after Blackwall.

"Even my generals are comparable to strong saints who are two to three levels above me in stages.

No way would my progression in strength be like those cliché novels where you go step by step and only fight strong guys just one level above you." revealed Kahn and rejoiced in the fact that his generals, who were no different than Saint rank bodyguards at this point would become his biggest aces like this.

So far, he had Rudra, Blackwall, Armin, Ceril, Oliver, and now Jugram who were comparable to at least a second stage and could even fight a third stage saint when they went all out.

"Hell, I have six of them who can get rid of stronger opponents for me. And if I use all of them together in a battle...."

"Muhahahaha!!!" laughed Kahn like a maniac as an evil grin came on his face.

"I already feel sorry for my enemies."

Chapter 448 - Drastic Outcome

ONE MONTH LATER.

The incident regarding the massacre had finally started to calm down. But the past month brought many major changes in the power structure of the Rakos Empire.

Even now, no one had heard anything about Victor and his allies who carried out the massacre in the Berawaa region.

After the proper burial and when the public attention shifted from the gravesite, Kahn created 10 thousand more subordinates using the fallen soldiers in secret as he did in the Kaldris region last time.

But even now, no one knew why Kahn was doing it.

The Demi-Human faction on the other hand... was half of what it was in the past after a month of public condemnation, political espionage, and power struggles with the Pureblood faction & the Neutral faction.

Both of them took the advantage of the situation to the fullest and forced through rumors and fake evidence, they indicted many of the important and powerful people from this faction who held influential positions in the government.

And now with both factions joining their hands together... the Demi-Human faction that was already going through an internal war after the incident of the massacre was revealed to the core members, it became an easy target for the former two factions.

Many Saints who were part of their faction, as well as their clans, left the Demi-Human faction. Because their top leaders and the faction leader himself had committed a taboo. And if they tried to show their loyalty... they'd lose all the power, influence and authority they held in their respective region.

Many used the excuse that they didn't know the plans of top leaders and faction leader themselves. So they had no part to play in it.

While using words such as they would never stoop so low to massacre their own countrymen and soldiers for some benefit, many of them broke off their relations with the faction that was once very hard to get in.

Because anyone who was even remotely connected to this faction was being shunned by the public.

And no matter how powerful one was... if they couldn't even make a living or run any businesses because the customers and the workers had refused to partake in the exchange... their power and wealth were bound to fall.

Most of the powerful and prestigious clans either joined other two factions or created small factions of their own. Because there was no true loyalty in this world since the beginning.

And without their support and authority in their respective regions of the empire, the Demi-Human faction had only half of its people and saints left after a month.

Those who stayed were either extremist with their beliefs or some were just waiting out to see where the future of this faction was headed and they'd make their decisions later after assessing the situation.

Because even if they joined the other two factions. They won't have that much influence or feel included in decision-making either.

Those with the most to lose had no choice but to stick around and find a way out. But given the current situation...

Even a random person on the street could tell that the Demi-Human faction was doomed.

On top of it... Victor and his fellow perpetrators were never found by anyone. No one had expected that it was Kahn who actually had them imprisoned after his moving and wrathful speech.

Even the investigation teams sent by the central government from the capital filled with 10 semi-saints couldn't find anything about their whereabouts. Kahn on the other end gave them his full support.

But both of them never succeeded. And everyone could only point their fingers at the faction in the question.

Meanwhile, the top leaders of the faction had refused to admit their faults. Saying that it was Victor who did everything and used their name to command the people to carry out the massacre.

But even though none of them could be arrested due to lack of evidence... there was no proof they could offer about Victor doing the whole thing by his own will either.

Any evidence was bound to get tested by the other two officials belonging to be enemy factions so they could no longer create a fake trail that solidified their innocence.

And since they were careful to not leave any traces or evidence between them and Victor during the massacre, they couldn't use it to twist the narrative either.

But instead of resolving this situation... it ended up becoming beneficial to their enemies.

So the Pureblood & Neutral faction used this news to spread more rumors that the Demi-Human faction was still hiding Victor and the others who played a part in the massacre. That they did not even want to admit their wrongs.

After this final nail in the coffin...

The damage done was simply immeasurable and as things stood... The hundred years old Demi-Human faction barely had resources and influence left to survive a decade. Many of their members and clans were leaving the faction and forces with each passing day.

Meanwhile... by torturing those who came with Victor, Kahn had found out and imprisoned all the spies planted inside his fiefdom by the Demi-Human faction.

He got rid of everyone in secret after the covenant soldiers arrested them in the name of investigation.

This was also a warning to other factions as well. That if they too tried to pull such a stunt, he'd take the same measures.

In their eyes, Kahn was no longer a little cub but a full-grown tiger who would hunt down those who entered his territory.

As for public opinion... Kahn's name as a sovereign and a righteous leader was spread across the whole empire. Even if someone didn't belong to the Verlassen fiefdom, they had a very good impression of Kahn and his rule.

On the first day of the new month... Kahn received a message from the capital.

That very evening... an envoy from his allied force came via a warship and Kahn welcomed them as he sat on his throne.

A young man who had a slim-looking figure with red eyes and shoulder-length silver hair, donned in white and yellow attire of a certain prestigious clan of the empire appeared in front of Kahn.

Behind this man, was a young swordswoman with the same physical characteristics.

"Long time no see..."

Kahn then gladly welcomed this young man who had a good relationship with him ever since he went to the capital Rathna.

"Szayel."

Chapter 449 - The Instructions

In front of Kahn, stood Szayel Mor Vandereich, the clan heir of the most prestigious and leading clan of the pureblood faction. It had been nearly 7 months since Kahn last met Szayel in the capital Rathna before the Emperor's Chosen competition started.

And behind him, was Vivian Mor Vandereich, his elder stepsister who once conspired to kill the vampire heir and also Kahn for thwarting their plans.

After Szayel's death, Vivian was supposed to become the only heir of her clan and then succeed her father and become the clan leader in the upcoming future.

She had the support of clan council members who were unhappy with her grandfather & father's leadership because they two were not extremists and didn't share the doctrine of Vampires ruling over the empire and achieving supremacy.

Rather, they wanted to maintain balance and ensure their species and their clan's survival because there was a time that they nearly went extinct in the Rakos Empire because of the rampant bloodbath caused by those who shared such supremacist beliefs four hundred years ago.

But because of Kahn, all of their plans turned to failure. And later, her father, Ismaetrazel Mor Vandereich used Kahn as bait to find the traitors in their clan and the entire Pureblood faction.

Kahn had learned quite a few harsh lessons because of his involvement with the Vandereich clan but after he won the Emperor's Chosen competition, he had cut off all ties with the Pureblood faction.

If not for the Blood-bind contract he made with Allister Mor Vandereich, the faction leader of the Pureblood faction who was also Szayel & Vivian's grandfather... he'd still be at odds with them.

However, his relationship with Szayel was never affected since both of them were used as chess pieces by the faction regardless of their origin. Kahn even had a hearty talk with Szayel when he invited the latter for a dinner in his Wayne Manor.

And both of them decided that night, that they'd never be used by others again. On the same night, Szayel also reached a resolution that he'd no longer stay as a spoiled rich brat but gain strength to the point where no one would treat him as a sacrificial lamb.

The last time they met was when Szayel gave Kahn the Recommendation Token that was sent by his father. And now, he appeared in front of Kahn with a confident demeanor.

After Kahn gestured with his right hand, the vampire heir sat on the closest one of the luxurious chairs on the right side. And behind him, stood Vivian, who was clad in their clan's signature armor like a professional bodyguard.

She had gone through the core-binding ritual as the punishment for betraying the clan and the faction. Which now made her a slave to Szayel. And her life was tied to his own. A cruel fate that was delivered by her own grandfather for betraying their clan and joining hands with the Demi-Human faction back then.

Kahn noticed that Vivian's eyes were now more lifeless than before. If not for her breathing movements, she'd look nothing but a statue to the onlookers.

"Congratulations." said Kahn as he noticed a change about Szayel.

"Thank you." spoke Szayel and slightly bowed his head.

"So how does it feel after breaking through the Grandmaster Rank after 2 decades of delay?" asked Kahn.

"I'm more surprised than you are. I guess there was some sort of psychological barrier that never allowed me to become a grandmaster.

If not for the whole incident with us back then... I wouldn't have been able to surpass my limits.

I think my own will to become stronger played a part in it." he said.

"Well, good that now you're keen on becoming powerful for your own sake than doing it out of obligation." said Kahn and gave a gentle smile.

After being looked down on and even conspired against by the people who practically raised him... Szayel had seen the reality of how even your flesh and blood will kill you for power and authority.

And now, he craved it not to live up to someone's expectations or any obligation as the clan heir... but for his ambitions and inner hunger for strength.

After an hour of chat and catching up with their current lives and circumstances... Szayel finally got to the task.

"Here's the reason why I came here." spoke Szayel and the next moment, an intrinsically patterned golden envelope came out of his space ring.

Ronin suddenly appeared out of thin air and took the letter.

Kahn opened the letter and read its context. But there was an expression of a surprise after he was finished.

The letter included...

'There is only one month left. You need to start preparing.

Szayel will give you a map. Use it to reach the entrance of that region.

The others have already started preparing and everyone has only 10 days window to enter and exit. Otherwise, you will be stuck in that place till your last moments.

The map will only help in entering the final barrier. As for what's inside or what you need to do to accomplish the task, is all up to you.'

Kahn was relieved to finally get the gist of the deal.

Previously, all he was told was that he needed to enter a particular region of the empire where only a semi-saint under the age of 50 could enter.

And those who entered once and came back could never enter there again.

On top of it... there were no records of what lay inside. So all the factions were looking for the strongest semi-saints of the younger generation with fighting capabilities.

This was also the reason why Kahn agreed to do the job. Because the rewards he demanded were simply too amazing and would save Kahn years of hard work and unnecessary trouble.

Kahn then received the map from Szayel and continued reading.

'The map has the structure of the inner two layers of the forbidden region.

And your main task is to search and retrieve the...'

Kahn then read the last line of the letter with a befuddled expression.

'Tablet of Arcana.'

Chapter 450 - Unexpected Arrival

After Kahn read through the letter, he ordered Ronin to guide Szayel and his envoy to their designated accommodations.

At the time of the night, he stood on the balcony of his royal bedroom and gazed at the bright moons that made the night seem tranquil at the same time.

As for Kahn... he had many things to think about after he received the letter and the map of the forbidden zone.

Although he found out the main reason why the Pureblood faction and the Neutral faction desperately wanted to recruit him back in the day... many things still eluded his understanding.

Tablet of Arcana.

Kahn had no idea about what the hell it was. The only thing he could make out of it was the shape based on its name.

Even the name itself added another layer of mystery to it. Absolutely revealing nothing about the history behind it.

But based on what he heard from Victor...

This forbidden zone that was at the foremost end of Verlassen fiefdom and existed at an intersection of three different regions... had something to do with the Imperial family that was massacred 100 years ago.

And now, Allister Mor Vandereich, one of the three strongest individuals in the entire Rakos Empire wanted Kahn to retrieve this Tablet of Arcana thing as part of the deal he made seven months ago.

[Whatever this tablet of Arcana thing is... it seems invaluable to the point where all three noble factions wouldn't even mind going as far as killing thousands of innocents and even rigging the Emperor's Chosen competition.

Who knows what kind of things they've done in order to get that thing in the past century.

But I don't understand why have they failed to acquire it even after 100 years?

Either it's something that even a semi-saint can't handle or there must some sort of condition which all the semi-saints that entered that zone failed to meet.] thought Kahn as he collected the basic information he had gathered till this point.

Because there must be a reason why no one succeeded even now. And that reason could explain why things were set in motion even before he participated in the Emperor's Chosen competition and got entangled in this crusade without even knowing.

If Kahn hadn't shown his prowess during the competition, he would've probably never even met the top brasses of the top three factions.

[No!

Even if I didn't participate in the competition, Ismaetrazel already knew about my rank and fighting capability. He would've gotten me involved in this regardless of the outcome of the competition.

And if I didn't win the competition and become the Sovereign of Verlassen fiefdom... maybe those vampires would've forced me or even made me a vampire or turned into their slave through that ritual mentioned by Stronoff Mikealson.] spoke a Kahn to himself as he came to another realization.

If he hadn't become the Emperor's Chosen... he'd probably be at the Vandereich clan's mercy or would've been turned into their puppet.

Kahn heaved a sigh and took a deep breath.

He just realized that by choosing the Sovereign storyline route, he actually evaded an invisible bullet that would've killed him for sure.

[And if I'm not wrong... the dome around the fiefdom was created 200 years ago.

And the previous Hero of Lightning also died in that place at the same time.

There must be a correlation. Something that was hidden by both the Imperial family and even the new government that came into existence a century ago.] another hypothesis hit his brain as Kahn finally felt the connection between these two things.

Plus the great war and the coup d'état against the Imperial family... Why do I feel like they're also connected to this Tablet of Arcana?] thought Kahn.

What great treasure was this Tablet of Arcana that had such chaotic history and who knew how many dead bodies and blood that was spilled to get it?

Kahn wasn't a fool to blindly believe whatever was told to him.

But based on the current situation, he had no idea what the hell was happening either or what secrets were buried.

His mind was completely discombobulated after trying to connect all the dots. Thinking that he had all of it figured out just by making some assumptions would be a great mistake.

This was something that he'd only find out after actually going into that forbidden zone when the time came.

The next morning... Szayel, Kahn, and Albestros had breakfast together and shared a lot of happenings each of them went through and reminisced about the old times when things seemed easier.

While Kahn and Albestros had struggles of their own in the Verlassen fiefdom, Szayel was getting dragged into the power struggle and politics of the Pureblood faction now that he was the sole heir of the Vandereich clan.

And finally, Kahn bid farewell to this old friend in the afternoon. He had no idea when he'd meet this vampire heir again but he was also happy to see that Szayel was becoming his own man and breaking through the mental shackles he suffered from for the past two decades.

At the time of the evening, Kahn was finally done with his duties, approving the tasks and affairs related to the fiefdom and finally took a breather.

But just then...

Kahn's mind suddenly went haywire and his head felt like it was hijacked by something else.

But before he could ask the system anything about the matter... he returned to his previous normal state in a matter of seconds.

[What the hell was that?!] thought Kahn.

Suddenly... Kahn felt a familiar presence.

But what caught his attention was that he could feel this presence that entered the Verlassen fiefdom from thousands of kilometers afar.

Ding!

Ding!

Kahn then received a personal message from Ronin.

And as the night came... he used one of his warships and traveled to a city on the farthest northern end of the capital Aesir.

He then entered a massive mansion located outside the borders of this city and finally met the person who invited him for this meeting in the night.

On the top floor of the mansion, was a broad bedroom which was somehow the meeting spot chosen by the one who sent the message via Ronin.

Kahn looked at the enchanting woman with peerless beauty standing in front of him.

Step!

Step!

She slowly walked towards Kahn and without even greeting him, she gently placed her head against his chest as she wrapped her arms around him.

[System, what the hell is happening? Didn't you say none of us will be affected?] asked Kahn.

Then his gaze shifted to this beautiful woman who was suddenly acting out of character.

"What's the meaning of this?"

He looked her right in the eyes and spoke her name...

"Kassandra."