

Darkness 591

Chapter 591 Buckling Up

The next morning, Kahn and Blackwall's rigorous started right off the bat. Because of the 8 months break, their bodies had lost the touch and now, Throk wanted to get them back in the form first.

2 weeks later... Kahn heard the system notification after going through day and night training after he recovered his peak form before the enlightenment.

[Following are the new skills and abilities unlocked by the host :

Bending (C Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to perfectly bend or curve the metal into the desired shape based on the requirements and dimensions of the metal.

The host can strategically heat sections of the metal or alloy in the forge before bending it, rather than heating the entire piece to form shapes.

The host can also unbend metals by reheating the metal and reversing your steps while memorizing the complete steps.

Punching (D Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to precisely use the Punch tool to make holes in hot metal.

The host will be able to make precise hits by heating the metal, identifying where to punch a hole and hammer the punching tool softly on the intended spot.

Drawing (C Rank) (Active) :

The host can now use this essential technique in blacksmithing which is used to make metal, alloys and forging material longer and thinner based on the intended design.

The host can manage the appropriate strength required to hold the tongs on a piece on the anvil and hammer both sides to extend the length.

Upsetting (C Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to metal thicker, shorter, and narrower based on the desired shape requirements.

This technique requires the host to heavily concentrate while forging. The process can be difficult to control due to the host's experience.

The host is advised to heat the specific part of the metal in the forge that is intended to shape, rather than heating the entire piece collectively.

Shrinking (D Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to perform the process of compressing metal between the flat head of the hammer and the flat surface of the anvil.

The host may be able to utilize it fully when the width of the anvil and flat head of the hammer is the same width as the object to be forged.

Annealing (A Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to make the material being forged easier to work with.

It can be used to soften the metal, causing it to bend and shape more easily. Annealing also protects the material from cracking or snapping.

To anneal material, the host will need to bring it up to heat in the forge and cool it down very slowly by placing it in sand or vermiculite. This is especially important when working with recycled materials.

Annealing removes impurities in the grain, increases the material's strength, and reduces its hardness.

Hardening (D Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to control the process of controlled heating and controlled cooling of the material in order to increase its strength.

The metal can be brought up to its highest temperature and is rapidly cooled by quenching it in a liquid... commonly water, salt water, or oil.

Water is the fastest quenching material, while oil and salt may be added to slow down the cooling process. This would prevent the materials from becoming brittle.

Tempering (F rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to temper the forged metal to increase the toughness and reduce excess hardness.

To temper, the metal should be heated and cooled at room temperature to decrease the brittleness and increase strength.

Cutting (B Rank) (Active) :

Gives a general sense of strength and precision to the host in order to cut metal, strike a hot cut chisel into material that has been heated up to a bright yellow color in the forge.

As the host cuts the steel, the chisel tip will also heat up, so the host must regularly quench the chisel in water to cool it off.

In order to protect the surface of the anvil, use a sacrificial piece of scrap metal between the material and the anvil. Soft metals like aluminum are ideal sacrificial pieces in order to keep the chisel sharp.

Shaping (C Rank) (Active) :

Hot metal can be shaped using bending, drawing, and upsetting techniques. First, the host must heat the metal in the forge until it is easily malleable. Then, strike the hot metal with a hammer against the anvil to shape it.

Tapering (C Rank) (Active) :

To forge a taper, the host needs to heat the material on one end and position it on the edge of the anvil. Using the drawing technique to strike the hot edge, rotating it 180 degrees each strike, and then 90 degrees each strike to narrow the edge to a tapered point.

Flattening (D Rank) (Active) :

Allows the host to use the flattening technique to reduce the thickness of a piece of metal through heating and striking.

Dishing (B Rank) (Active) :

The host can use the Dishing technique which is used to shape flat sheet metal into curved shapes by hammering it into a concave indentation, similar to a mold.

The host can use a dishing stump as a form to hammer into. A dishing stump is a large wooden block, often built from a tree trunk, that has a circle carved into it, where the sheet metal is placed and hammered into.

Collaring (D Rank) (Active) :

The host can perform collaring, which is a joining technique that is accomplished by wrapping a piece of metal around the pieces of material that will be joined.

The host must strategically heat the two pieces of metal to be joined and hammer them together in one area, creating small "O" shapes.

This technique is also used in forge welding.

Chapter 592 Changed Personality

Kahn heard the pleasant news in his head and had an elated expression. 2 weeks of tireless training and continuous effort in honing his skills had finally rewarded him into becoming a Beginner rank blacksmith at last.

[All Blacksmithing skills and techniques have gained 20% more mastery in them.] reported the system again.

But then, his expression contorted as soon as he noticed a change in the system itself.

"What the hell... even the system is acting like some tutorial guide.

And it's revealing too much basic information as if I'm some kid.

Many of the details it provided were like most obvious things." spoke Kahn after going through the notifications in his mind.

"Could it be because of the gifts?" he wondered.

Because when it came to any other skill or abilities, the system never spoofed the information and only listed the bare necessary details. But for the Blacksmithing skills he just unlocked, it gave him a walkthrough of these skills.

But instead of paying too much attention to them, Kahn then secretly created 5 new doppelgangers and deactivated the ones already practicing inside the Dimensional Domain.

These new ones now also possessed the skills he just unlocked. And Kahn planned to use them to increase his mastery and proficiency in the newly acquired skills.

The turbulent journey on the path of Blacksmithing was going to be much harder and hence, he felt the urgency to absorb and adapt these skills as much as he could.

ONE MONTH LATER.

[Congratulations to the host for becoming a Grandmaster Rank Blacksmith.

All abilities have been upgraded to S Rank and above.

Effectiveness and Proficiency of all the Blacksmithing skills have been increased by 25%

The host is advised to breakthrough to higher ranks to increase the ranks of the skills.] informed the system on a starry night.

"Alright, Impart them to Blackwall. Maybe it'll help him break through from master rank and become a grandmaster." ordered Kahn with indifferent eyes.

Unlike the first time, he wasn't surprised or treated this matter very seriously.

The past month... had changed him.

Kahn made a lot of progress using his doppelgangers. And rose the ranks of skills with day and night training done by the original body and five other doppelgangers. There had been many days when he didn't even drink a glass of water or ate anything either.

But since he was a saint, he forgot eating and sleeping as his strength and physical stats were too damn high.

But also during that period, he broke through to Master rank Magician and managed to raise some of SSS Rank skills to Saint Rank.

He was working like a mindless machine without a single day of break as if he had no life or even a soul.

The only breaks he took were when Venessa barged into their forge and forcefully took him out for a chat.

Unlike before, she was no longer pestering him to join her side but rather looked worried about his well-being for some reason. Her, Kahn had been like this for the past 9 months. And the past month alone, her people had informed that Kahn had been under a continuous training regime.

And due to the gifts given by Brokkr and Eitri being in effect, Kahn's learning speed increased by manyfolds as he started adapting to various techniques in just a matter of days.

It took him lesser time as his training continued while adapting to new forging techniques and knowledge. But even so, Kahn did not stop his extra training on the side while bearing the pressure of the other 15 doppelgangers.

This made a qualitative change in his personality as well.

Even to someone like Throk, who should be happy to see his rank up and rise in terms of skills... It looked like Kahn had lost the light in his eyes.

He was no longer the brat you used to talk back to the old dwarf but a lifeless machine that was just there to complete the given work.

Like a man who would rather sacrifice his health and sanity for the sake of meeting the expected quota of work than prioritize his well-being above everything else.

Hence, after Throk herself contacted her, she dropped by a few times to check up on her future vassals and out of a sense of pity for Kahn.

Because to everyone else, it appeared like he was forcing himself because of the upcoming faceoff against Helsi while having too many expectations on his shoulders. And at the same time, the fate of his master's company, reputation and decades of hard work was at stake and he was simply falling behind.

In a way, it reminded Vanessa of herself while growing up after her mother's death. How she had been under constant vigilance and mental pressure to achieve strength on her own because there were many people watching from shadows and trying to get rid of her.

Soon, her visits became the only occasions where Kahn took a breather and now, the relationship between him and the princess became more relaxed.

"And why are you here again, Venessa? Don't you have some political stuff to do... people to attract to your side in order to claim the throne?" asked Kahn with an annoyed expression.

"Hmph! I have to take some time off too you know. All that stuff related to managing millions of people in the army, the public order and then these nobles and business organizations that have allied themselves with us... it's too taxing even for someone so capable and beautiful like me." said Venessa pridefully as she praised herself.

"I believe you... except for the last part. Seems kind of overstretched statement." replied Kahn as he sat across the table.

"Hey, punk! Do you want me to beat you to death?

I can just kill you with a slap." she threatened sarcastically.

Kahn rolled his eyes and retorted.

"That would be great. I'll be spared of your nagging then." he taunted Venessa.

But instead of feeling offended... Vanessa liked this tone while talking with Kahn.

Growing up... she had no friends and even the definition of friends had become such as someone she could ally with or use for something.

But with the man in front of her... he didn't care about her position or treated her as someone worth worshipping. He spoke without honorifics and didn't mind angering her either.

Yet, this also made her feel better because for the first time... she could be herself in front of someone and didn't have to carry the facade of elegance, manners, royalty, decorum and constant assertion of authority.

Just like Kahn... these meetings of theirs had also become a time to relax for Vanessa.

Soon, another argument started between the two.

As things stood... their relationship wasn't that of a princess and her subject...

But that of Friends.

Chapter 593 Behind Hidden Walls

More weeks passed and now, only 4 months were left before the faceoff that was announced by the dwarven council. And even the imperial clan and the church of hetrax also helped the news spread across the entire empire.

Now, this issue between two saint blacksmiths was turned into political warfare.

One side who supported and allied themselves with Tawerik was trying to make it as if Throk was the one in the wrong.

But on the other side, Throk had the support of both Imperial heirs and the church so they vilified the other side even more. Everyone who worked with them naturally took the stand on the latter's side.

Meanwhile, the Dwarven Council and the Imperial Clan were taking the neutral stand and acted as a mediator since they couldn't get directly associated with either side otherwise it would create problems for them no matter who won or lost.

But despite all the hype and predictions made by everyone... Kahn paid no heed to the noises and didn't even meet the people who came to visit him to deepen their friendship and support.

These days, Kahn was in a world of his own. Like a historian trying to uncover the truth behind the events in annals of history or a philosopher trying to find the meaning of life.

And with every new metal, alloy and material he came to perfect while improving his knowledge and skills about how to use or work on them... he gradually started making astounding improvements.

And with the imparted skills and the aid received from Kahn... Blackwall was also making drastic improvements and just broke through to Grandmaster rank in Blacksmithing a couple of days ago.

Even Throk, his own master, was overwhelmed by this skyrocketing progress by both disciples and felt that the enlightenment might have just made them absolute behemoths of this craft.

But to him, this was also an opportunity.

"Listen brats... you both are now qualified enough.

So there's no reason for me to hold back any longer either.

Now that both of you have mastered the advanced techniques... I'll get to the most important techniques that will help you make good enough to sit amongst the prestigious blacksmiths." he declared in front of the disciples.

And then, he let out a smug grin and revealed the biggest step that alienated the gifted blacksmiths from the rest of the grass.

"Let me teach you... Artificing."

Meanwhile, a completely different scenario was running in the main headquarters of the church of hetrax where the Pope himself resided.

Hundreds of people were running around and a majority of the saints affiliated with the church were present in a secret meeting.

Unlike the congregation, this time... there were less than 20 people but they were all the main authority of the church.

"We can not draw any attention. The preparations must be made in quiet if we're to move against the imperial clan.

And I think we have the perfect way to lure the Emperor into our trap without letting any reinforcements of the imperial clan get involved." said Demiurges Val Arhlem, the pope.

Soon, on a war table, he told the main hard hitters of the church a well-devised plan.

"It will work. But the biggest risk is... who will fight the emperor?"

He's an 8th stage saint and we don't even have enough 7th stage saints on our side." said a fireborne Cardinal.

"About that... you don't have to worry.

Just make sure that we're ready. And the battlefield must be completely sealed to the point no one can enter or leave a thousand kilometer radius.

Because if the Imperial Guards and the Emperor's four advisors enter the fray... it will be nigh impossible." he spoke in a commanding voice.

"Your holiness... when do we actually begin the attack?" asked one of the archbishops.

"When they're forced to let down their guard and no one is expecting it." he said with an insidious tone as he declared the time of executing their plan.

"After the Blacksmithing Duel."

Later at the midnight, Demiurges stood alone in his quarters and basked in the peaceful moonlight as he stood on the top balcony.

Swoosh!!

Suddenly, a black and red shadow appeared behind him and instantly kneeled in servitude.

"Your holiness... what are your orders?" asked a fireborne warrior with a trident on his back.

"The time is coming close. And we need all of the chess pieces together.

Even they have a part to play in it whether they like it or not." he said in a grim voice.

This figure nodded and replied in an obedient tone.

"I have done the thorough work of turning them against the imperial clan. Not a single one of them wishes to serve the empire under imperial rule.

Also because of the incident with Princess Venessa... they all have been on an edge since that day.

I used their fear and uneasiness to brainwash their minds." spoke this fireborne who emitted the aura of a 4th stage saint.

"And what about him? Was he easy to manipulate?" asked the pope with a somber countenance as he looked at this insider of theirs.

But the saint shook his head.

"He's too smart. He still doesn't trust anyone easily. He even acts like he's walking into the trap and being goaded into doing things.

But I always get a feeling that I can't see through him no matter how close or trustworthy I get." he reported.

"Even so... he will be forced to jump in.

Or there's no future for him in this empire even if he does have the potential." said Demiurge as he scoffed off.

"And what about his side activities?

How many?" he queried.

To his questions, the saint's face contorted as he replied.

"Since the imperial decree... it has become hard to bury that sort of matters.

So far... The count is 183."

To the saint's response... the pope also had an exasperated expression.

"This child... is the key that will help us rule this empire."

Chapter 594 Surprise Madafaka

Fuck you and your mom and your sister and your job

And your broke-ass car and that shit you call art

Fuck you and your friends that I'll never see again

Everybody but your dog, you can all fuck off

[Verse 1]

I swear I meant to mean the best when it ended

Even tried to bite my tongue when you start shit

Now you're textin' all my friends asking questions

They never even liked you in the first place

Dated a girl that I hate for the attention

She only made it two days, what a connection

It's like you'd do anythin' for my affection

You're goin' all about it in the worst ways.

I was into you, but I'm over it now

And I was tryin' to be nice

But nothing's getting through, so let me spell it out

A-B-C-D-E, F you

And your mom and your sister and your job

And your broke-ass car and that shit you call art

Fuck you and your friends that I'll never see again

Everybody but your dog, you can all fuck off

[Post-Chorus]

Na-na, na-na, na, na, na-na

A-B-C-D-E, F you

You said you just needed space and so I gave it

When I had nothin' to say you couldn't take it

Told everyone I'm a bitch, so I became it

Always had to put yourself above me

I was into you, but I'm over it now

And I was tryin' to be nice

But nothing's getting through, so let me spell it out

A-B-C-D-E, F you

And your mom and your sister and your job

And your craigslist couch and the way your voice sounds

Fuck you and your friends that I'll never see again

Everybody but your dog, you can all fuck off

[Post-Chorus]

Na-na, na-na, na, na, na-na

A-B-C-D-E, F off (F off)

Na-na, na-na, na, na, na-na

A-B-C-D-E, F you

[Outro]

And your mom and your sister and your job

And your broke-ass car and that shit you call art

Fuck you and your friends that I'll never see again

Everybody but your dog, you can all fuck off

Verse 1

Immortal temptation

Takes over my mind

Condemned

Falling weak on my knees

Summon the strength

Of Mayhem

Chorus 1

I am the storm that is approaching

Provoking

Black clouds in isolation

I am reclaimer of my name

Born in flames

I have been blessed

My family crest is a demon of death

Forsakened I am awakened

A phoenix's ash in dark divine

Descending misery

Destiny chasing time

Verse 2

Inherit the nightmare

Surrounded by fate

Can't run away

Keep walking the line

Between the light

Led astray

Through vacant halls I won't surrender

The truth revealed in eyes of ember
We fight through fire and ice forever
Two souls once lost and now they remember

Chorus 2

I am the storm that is approaching

Provoking

Black clouds in isolation

I am reclaimer of my name

Born in flames

I have been blessed

My family crest is a demon of death

Forsakened I am awakened

A phoenix's ash in dark divine

Descending misery

Destiny chasing time

Disappear into the night

Lost shadows left behind

Obsession's pulling me

Fading I've come to take what's mine

Bridge

Lurking in the shadows under veil of night

Constellations of blood pirouette

Dancing through the graves of those who stand at my feet

Dreams of the black throne I keep on repeat

A derelict of dark summoned from the ashes

The puppet master congregates all the masses

Pulling strings twisting minds as blades hit

You want this power then come try and take it

Beyond the tree

Fire burns

Secret love

Bloodline yearns

Dark minds embrace

Crimson Joy

Does your dim heart

Heal or Destroy?

Chorus 3

Bury the light deep within

Cast aside there's no coming home

We're burning chaos in the wind

Drifting in the ocean all alone.

As I stare into the eye of the coming

Apocalypse I see them reaching for my soul

I cannot erupt, I must control

I cannot erupt, I must explode

Funny how the mind tries to sink me deeper

As the evil tries to turn me around

I will not falter, shout at the devil

As I bury them six foot underground

The hours trapped in windowpane

As it all locks me in chains

The heartless ride and happy

Thoughts of this crumbling world

You cannot kill me

I am Omega

You cannot kill me

I am Subhuman

You cannot kill me (I cannot erupt)

I am Omega (I must control)

You cannot kill me (I cannot erupt)

I must explode

I must not forget, that I have bled

From no respect for the demons in my head

Something save me, put me out of my destiny

And drop me safely in this hell

I see right past me, the eyes are flashing

As I call upon the dark gift to erupt

With the devil on my back

And out demons right in front

I slash through and slice its shadow up

You cannot kill me

I am Omega

You cannot kill me

I am Subhuman

You cannot kill me (I cannot erupt)

I am Omega (I must control)

You cannot kill me (I cannot erupt)

I must explode

I feel the devil in me

We're coming right for you

I feel the devil in me

We're coming right for you

You cannot kill me

I am Omega

You cannot kill me

I am Subhuman

You cannot kill me (I cannot erupt)

I am Omega (I must control)

You cannot kill me (I cannot erupt)

I must explode!

The darkness of night falls around my soul

And the hunter within loses control

Gotta let it out - gotta let it out

Gotta let it out - gotta let it out

This demon inside has ahold of me

Clenching its power - trying to break free

Gotta let it out - gotta let it out

Gotta let it out - gotta let it out

Move fast, baby - Don't be slow

Step aside - Reload - time to go

I can't seem to control

All this rage that's inside me

Pullin' shots - aiming dots - Yeah I don't miss

Branded by Fire - Born in the abyss

Red hot temper - I just can't resist

All this vengeance inside me!

All of these voices inside of my head

Blinding my sight in a curtain of red

Frustration is getting bigger

Bang Bang Bang – Pull my Devil Trigger!

Savior! Bloodstain! Hellfire! Shadow!

Heaven on a landslide!

Savior! Bloodstain! Hellfire! Shadow!

Heaven on a landslide!
If you have to ask, it's too late
Somewhere in between, your character grace
An eye on fantasy, touching nails
Sparks fly, off of me and onto you
Brothers in the dark, fight for your life!
Devils in the dark, fight for your life!
Fight for your life! Fight for your life!
Savior! Bloodstain! Hellfire! Shadow!
Heaven on a landslide!
Savior! Bloodstain! Hellfire! Shadow!
Heaven on a landslide!
Devil in my blood, living on the edge
Split myself in two, death is all around
Summoning the power, drag myself through pain
Blood spills, off of me and on to you
Brothers in the dark, fight for your life!
Devils in the dark, fight for your life!
Fight for your life! Fight for your life!
Savior! Bloodstain! Hellfire! Shadow!
Heaven on a landslide!
Savior! Bloodstain! Hellfire! Shadow!
Heaven on a landslide!
Crimson cloud! Evening sky!
Crimson cloud! Evening sky!
Savior! Bloodstain! Hellfire! Shadow!
Heaven on a landslide!
Savior! Bloodstain! Hellfire! Shadow!
Heaven on a landslide!

Savior! Bloodstain! Hellfire! Shadow!

Heaven on a landslide!

Savior! Bloodstain! Hellfire! Shadow!

Heaven on a landslide!

There once was a ship that put to sea

The name of the ship was the Billy of Tea

The winds blew up, her bow dipped down

Oh blow, my bully boys, blow (huh)

Soon may the Wellerman come

To bring us sugar and tea and rum

One day, when the tonguing is done

We'll take our leave and go

She'd not been two weeks from shore

When down on her a right whale bore

The captain called all hands and swore

He'd take that whale in tow (huh)

Soon may the Wellerman come

To bring us sugar and tea and rum

One day, when the tonguing is done

We'll take our leave and go

Da-da-da-da-da

Da-da-da-da-da-da-da

Da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da

Before the boat had hit the water

The whale's tail came up and caught her

All hands to the side, harpooned and fought her

When she dived down low (huh)

Soon may the Wellerman come

To bring us sugar and tea and rum
One day, when the tonguing is done
We'll take our leave and go
No line was cut, no whale was freed
The captain's mind was not of greed
And he belonged to the Whaleman's creed
She took that ship in tow (huh)
Soon may the Wellerman come
To bring us sugar and tea and rum
One day, when the tonguing is done
We'll take our leave and go
Da-da-da-da-da
Da-da-da-da-da-da-da
Da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da
For forty days or even more

Chapter 595 Behind the Mask

Azerog Musgarf was a 4th stage saint and also an heir of the Musgarf Clan, one of the six main Fireborne clans of the Vulcan empire. In terms of manpower, standing and authority, they were only below the Imperial Clan and served the latter loyally since the very beginning when this empire was founded.

As the unparalleled genius of his generation, Azerog was famed to be the biggest rising star 10 years ago among all the prodigies of the empire just at the age of 25.

During those times, he rightfully won the title of clan heir and would inherit the position after his grandfather and father were done with their term.

Yet, a once-in-a-century genius like him was now forced to do the dirty job for a monster like the Hero of Fire, Axel Lobethrox.

And the main reason was... it was a task he was assigned to do by two grand figures of the empire. One being his grandfather, who was the current clan leader and the second being Demiurge Val Arhlem, the Pope himself.

Because 5 years ago, when he was chosen to be a member of the Hero's Party... he came to learn a particular truth about the new generation of summoned Heroes and what they signified for each empire.

As for Axel himself... this man had a very dark past even before he was chosen by their god Hetrax and then summoned into their world.

Once an individual of honor and dignity like Azerog was now reduced to a handyman who had been tasked with controlling people and having them kidnap such defenseless and weak women from the past 5 years because of his loyalty to his clan and the empire demanded him to.

Even though he never thought highly of the human race like most of his kinsmen and the nobles of this empire... the acts Axel committed every month in the past 5 years were testing him to his core.

This was the real face of Axel, the chosen Hero whose acts of bravery and morality were spread across the empire and the normal population worshipped him as the embodiment of their god's will.

Even the other members of the Hero's Party were unaware of the hideous truth about Axel in any way.

On the surface, he looked like an admirable human with integrity and ethical values, a facade he was an expert at portraying in front of others. But his true nature... only the Pope and he knew about it.

And on top of it... he was a cannibal. Precisely, he only liked to eat the flesh of women after he was done fulfilling his psychotic acts with them.

Before the Imperial Decree, nobody cared about human lives and authorities didn't even register missing humans because of the prejudice their social structure had against the race...

But after the Emperor's announcement because of the acts of Rogis Hos Sigfreed, the second prince became public... now people started paying attention to humans.

Thus, it came extremely hard to randomly kidnap women from the capital Arkensan like before.

Hence, just like the two victims, they started to hunt in small towns and places where no one had the means to do thorough investigation in case they kidnapped such women demanded by Axel.

Azerog on the other end... was forced to follow the orders even if his very being opposed him to do so. And the only reason he could use to justify his crimes and deceive himself...

Was that he did it for the greater good of their empire. the main headquarters of the church of Hetrax, Axel and Azerog kneeled in front of the Pope.

Looking at Axel... Demiurge tried to hide his disgust towards the Hero of Fire and spoke in a kind tone.

"Things are about to get in motion. I need to know if you have the resolve." he said.

Regardless of his position, Demiurge had his own set of beliefs.

He didn't care about human lives or how many people he had to kill to keep his authority and the strength of the church intact.

He was someone born among and raised by the church. To him, it was the only thing that mattered even before he became the Pope over a century ago.

But after the summoning of the new Hero... even he abhorred Axel's acts.

Because not every killer was a rapist or liked to torture people. Some killed for necessity and to meet their end goals... in their eyes, it was done for the greater purpose. Demiurge belonged to that category himself.

But some killed just for fun. That sense of power and control over someone's life... gave them the highest form of ecstasy. And Axel Lobethrox belonged to that kind of psychopath while he hid his face behind the mask.

Axel was the kind who first ruined the world of these women. Then toyed around with their lives and finally when they had completely broken down... he killed when they lost all hope to live.

There was a time when even Demiurge wondered why their God chose such a man in the beginning.

But after finding out a certain truth about Axel's origin and his Divine Abilities... he had no choice but to make do with their situation.

In reality, the Musgarf clan leader, Azerog's grandfather was actually an old friend of Demiurge who had secret ties with the church while on the surface, they still served the imperial clan.

Thus he ordered Azerog, whom they had planted when the Hero's Party was formed, to work as his aide since they couldn't risk his monstrous side getting exposed to the empire.

And now, only the two of them knew this horrifying truth about the Hero of Fire.

Soon, the pope told Axel about their plan that would happen after the Blacksmithing Duel between Kahn and Helsi.

"So tell me... are you in or not? This is something that would help you greatly as well." spoke the pope with somber eyes.

And in response, Axel gave a devilish smirk as he licked his lips and spoke in an ominous tone.

"Finally... I will be able to get my hands on her."

Chapter 596 The Artificing

Unbeknownst to Kahn... many ploys and hidden schemes were being orchestrated that he had no idea about in the slightest. He had no ties with the church or the imperial clan and even his contact with their official representatives was minimal as Throk was the figurehead of this company.

So sticking to his usual routine... Kahn had now developed into a completely different person. He was calmer, more patient during the forging and had mastered utilizing his skills.

The Mineral Transmutation skill he got from the mountain titan greatly helped him in advancing his skills and in the past few days alone, he could feel that he was about to have a breakthrough in the Blacksmithing craft in upcoming days.

And like promised, Throk started teaching both his students about Artificing. A branch of the Blacksmithing profession that he had heard about since the time he lived in Flavot city but never had the chance to learn much about it.

Because he had to hide his identity as Hero of Darkness, he couldn't inquire much about it from the old man Albestros either.

But now, his new master named Throk Oakenshield was finally going to teach him this intriguing part of the trade that only the most experienced elves and the extremely talented blacksmiths like Albestros Winston, the top blacksmith of Rakos Empire as well as the top 5 Saint rank blacksmiths of Vulcan empire could master.

"Listen brats... forget whatever you learned till this point.

Although this is half the part of becoming a saint blacksmith... it has no relation with the skills you've acquired and mastered previously." spoke Throk.

Then he took out few books out of his space ring and placed them on a stone table placed at the western end of his private forge where he was making Kahn's weapons and armors using the Guardian Dragon's body from months since their deal was agreed upon.

But today, he stopped the work just to teach them the basics of this field.

"Artificing is also an integral part of the study of magic. Something only an individual of a mage class can master while learning and perfecting their control over mana and world energy." he revealed and continued in a somber tone.

"But even among the mages, you'll find that not even 10% know how to make proper magic formations or use the runes.

Unlike the Enchanter class that creates objects and constructs by infusing mana and world energy... Artificers use magic formations to bypass the restrictions of their class and mana reserves." he iterated and handed down two both to Kahn and Blackwall respectively.

"In reality, these magic formations are just a conduit to impart mana and world energy to enhance the object such as a weapon, an armor or even an artifact to perform a specific function or an ability.

And those magic formations, no matter how small or big they are... they're categorized as Runes." explained Throk.

"I see. So they're completely different from the magic formations cast by mages to use a skill or a spell?" queried Kahn.

"Correct. The normal magic formations by mages are often cast in order to convert their mana and world energy into a particular force associated by an elemental skill.

Some can use it to protect themselves by casting a barrier or even use it as an offensive skill while adding an element their bodies are compatible with." said Throk like he was imparting a great wisdom of the world.

"But then how does one use that energy on a weapon or an armor? If the caster has stopped using their skill and thus closing the supply of mana... without it, the object or the artifact should no longer be able to hold it.

There's no medium to store that world energy and mana at all." queried Blackwall as he folded his arms.

To his thoughtful question, Throk nodded in approval and answered...

"That is what makes it completely different than normal magic formations.

They are cast to instantly attack or protect the caster for a prolonged period.

But Runes... they're not cast to use for either of the purposes but rather storing and circulating the caster's mana and world energy. . com

As if they're embedded on the targeted objects while functioning like a part of it." he explained.

"How? There's no source to sustain them after being drawn on the objects." queried Kahn with a perplexed expression.

But to his question, Throk opened the books books he gave to them and opened the first pages with each of his hands.

"Your answer lies here." he said with a content expression.

He was already impressed by their queries because it attested to their thirst for knowledge as well as their mindset to seriously learn Artificing.

Kahn and Blackwall started reading the first few paragraphs of the information written on the pages and soon, their eyes were wide open.

"This... this shouldn't be possible. How can it function like this?" asked Blackwall.

"That's what makes it really hard. And even the most talented among the magician class fail to master it because of the same reason.

This practice of magic in itself takes years and lot of resources.

Even though we don't have that much time... I will use the secret dwarven methods that our ancestors have been using to help you greatly improve those skills in short time." he said with a coy smile.

"But know this... it will need your undivided attention as well as full focus and commitment.

You will need to master every single rune and understand how to imbued your own mana and magic in them.

Otherwise the battle is already lost." spoke Throk as he forewarned his disciples.

Kahn and Blackwall nodded in response, their eyes full of battle intent as if they were ready to face in millions of adversities thrown at them.

To them, Artificing was a hurdle they wanted to pass with their skills after coming so long in this journey.

Thus, both of them were now fully prepared for mastering this new technique.

"Alright then... let's make some graffitis."

Chapter 597 Infinite Possibilities

On the second day of training in Artificing, just like before, Throk started explaining the ins and outs of the craft to build Kahn and Blackwall's sturdy foundation and thus, he started with the advanced knowledge from the get-go after seeing how much potential both of them had displayed after receiving the enlightenment.

He drew the sign of two overlapping circles curved and connected to each other.

"Do you know what this sign represents?" he asked.

"Infinity." replied Kahn the very next moment.

"Hah? Did you read about it in the books?"

"Ah... yes." replied the human disciple.

Kahn was a man of science in his previous life. So he obviously recognized the infinity (∞) sign.

"Let me ask you something.

Imagine that this is a flow of mana and world energy represented through this sign.

Can you tell me what principle this sign represents?" he asked in a serious voice.

"Limitlessness." spoke Blackwall although he had no prior knowledge about this sign like Kahn.

"What does this signify to you?" asked Throk to Kahn.

"No true end, incalculable, something that is impossible to be quantified." he replied like the true nerd he was in past life as Elric.

"Good. How would you two feel if I told you that we can apply the same principle while carving runes?" asked the old dwarf with a coy smile.

To his statement... both the disciples had their eyes wide open.

"Impossible! Mana and world energy don't work like that." spoke Blackwall.

"Ha ha! Then tell me something... Where is the point of origin and where is the end.

Also, which direction is it flowing in?"

To his question... both Kahn and Blackwall were too stunned to speak.

Because if this logic could be used in Rune carving... there were simply infinite possibilities.

"Now do you understand how Runes can sustain and integrate themselves?" asked Throk as he tested the cleverness of his disciples.

Both Kahn and Blackwall spoke in unison as they finally understood why Runes worked the way they did... they finally understood the very foundation of Runes and Artificing itself after coming to this mind-boggling realization.

"Self-reforming, self-regenerating and most importantly... self-sustaining."

Chapter 598 Two Issues

Everything was carrying on as it was supposed to happen. Whether it was Kahn studying and perfecting his Rune training or the Church making their moves before the blacksmithing duel that was about to happen in 4 months from now on in order to overthrow the imperial rule.

As the days closed by, Hector was making rapid decisions among his followers and trying to sway as many people as he could whether they were influential people in the empire, owned big franchises, selling favors to nobles or even using his authority as the prince to make underhanded and unethical deals just so he could increase his support to become the Crown Prince.

Venessa on the other end fared far better because to many of her followers, she was on good terms with Throk who occasionally called her to meet her or Kahn, the old dwarf's disciple who was to participate in the duel.

In their eyes, Throk also represented the support of the Church of Hetrax. And even if he were to lose at this point... they were ready to extend their hands and support the dwarf because the endgame was more worth to them.

And everyone was already aware how compared to Hector and Rogis, one of whom had lost the rights as a prince... Venessa was smarter, stronger and her potential surpassed her brothers by a lot.

Although many had qualms about her heritage as half-human... the visionary people also had their minds working differently and could see many possibilities that would actually help them reign supreme if they supported Venessa instead of Hector.

Because the rumors of the Hero of Fire being enamored with Venessa had already reached their ears recently.

The source obviously being the church of hetrax, just that they didn't reveal their face and used their other side branches hidden from the public to deliver this information to these figures.

In reality, the church had plans of their own and both Hector, as well as Venessa, played a part in it. This rumor... was just one of the seeds they were planting for the future.

Because soon, there was going to be a change in the ruling powers.

While everyone went about their daily lives, there was a completely different scenario in the imperial castle.

Five figures were seated in the throne hall of the emperor. 4 of whom were adorned in completely red robes. These four figures, each of whom was a 5th stage saint themselves was seated on the luxurious chairs below the main throne.

And on this red and golden throne, was a fireborne with crimson hair that moved and floated like a blazing flame. These four figures were the official advisors who appeared during the imperial trial for Rogis, the second prince and the person seated on the throne who emitted the saint pressure of an 8th stage saint was the Emperor of the Vulcan empire himself.

Havi Hos Sigfreed, the 6th and the current ruling emperor of the empire of fire had an agitated expression on his face as his 4 trusted advisors made reports about the current happenings of the empire.

"So nothing on Hero of Darkness even now?"

It's been a year already and our spies found nothing about him in both the enemy empires?

What kind of joke is this!" his voice thundered in the room, sending shivers to even his advisors.

"We apologize, your majesty. But we know for certain that he isn't in our empire either.

There hasn't been any new emergence of any noticeable human in our empire. Someone like a chosen hero would not be able to keep quiet for long.

And even the Hero of Fire used Sage's Eye divine ability to track him at the starting point of the No Man's Land to our empire.

He reported that the Hero of Darkness indeed hasn't entered our empire." spoke the elderly fireborne with white hair as he tried to maintain gaze with the emperor with his frail body.

"Tch! Then at least confirm if he's in the other two or not. You all know how important the key is.

We have Axel to hold our end... but another key will decide our future and standing during the war against the Demon God when the time comes.

The Hero of Darkness is the only one without any powerful allies or an empire protecting him unlike the rest." he spoke in a discontent voice.

"What about the church and dwarven council? Any major movements from them?" he asked.

To his query, a female fireborne advisor responded in a meek tone...

"Recently, both the church and the dwarven council are working hard to spread the matters of the blacksmithing duel. The face-off between the disciples of master Throk Oakenshield and master Bifur Tawerik." she responded.

To her report, the Emperor had a complicated expression.

"First both of my children, then the church and finally the dwarven council..."

Why do I feel like this matter is overblown many times?

It's not like there haven't been such duels in the past.

But none of them became the empire-wide sensation.

What angle is everyone playing at?" he questioned in a hushed tone to himself.

But after hearing his word, one of the advisors decided to speak.

"I have a report regarding that matter as well, your majesty." he said in a hoarse voice.

"Speak."

"Recently, we found out that the Oakenshield company is directly selling their products to prince Hector and princess Venessa.

The quality is superb and using those high-ranked weapons and armors... both of them have been secretly luring many top figures, military commanders and nobles to join their side.

And from the past 10 months... it has been working in their favor.

Compared to before... the number of retainers and followers who support their claim to the throne as your successor has risen by 30 times already.

These numbers... they even surpassed your majesty's in the past." he reported.

"Oh... so that was why they got mixed up with him after Rogis' matters became public in the imperial court.

And here I thought they did it because of my history with Master Oakenshield when I was not even the crown prince... To win my praise and blessings." he said after contemplating a few things on his own.

The emperor suddenly remembered his old days as a brash and hot-headed prince of the empire.

To him, dying as a warrior on a battlefield while basking in the glory was more important than becoming the emperor.

He never wanted to become the emperor in the first place. Only because of his father's untimely demise due to illness and his elder brother, the crown prince falling in a battle against the Zivot empire, their neighbor and enemy empire that was ruled by the Elves... Havi was forced to step in and rule as the emperor as his responsibility 35 years ago.

But before all that... he had a good friendship with Throk Oakenshield who had become a saint Blacksmith only a couple of decades ago and had known Havi as Throk was the one who made his first set of weapons and armors.

After becoming the Emperor... he couldn't be associated with many people from his past for too many reasons. And even when he heard about Rogis targeting the old dwarf, he couldn't directly intervene.

As for his 2nd son who was a total scum... he had no care about him at all.

Even to an emperor or an empress... their children are born mainly because of alliances and political gain... Havi was no exception to this.

Thus he did not bat an eye while sacrificing his useless son to bring down the church and nobles after Rogis' deeds were exposed.

As for two of his children using Throk to gain influence... it was understandable to him. Because not every strong individual was inherently powerful or had many skills.

To many warriors and mages, their weapons and armors played a vital role in their overall performance and battle prowess. The higher-ranked weapons and tools obviously gave them more edge so it was already common knowledge that everyone wanted epic rank weapons and armors.

Thus using a Saint Blacksmith to their advantage after supporting his company and using the goods he sold them directly to make business and also gain the support of influential figures... it was indeed genius planning.

Little did he know that it wasn't his children who had this idea but rather the very human he was trying to find.

Back to the present moment... the advisor told him superficial information first but then his expression contorted.

"There are two main things I think your majesty should know." he said.

To his words, the rest of the advisors also had complicated expressions as if they already knew what he was about to reveal.

"One of them concerns the issue of those who are protecting it. To be honest it's not the issue of their rank but their numbers.

The Oakenshield company has a total of seven saints as guardians."

"What?!" even the emperor himself was bamboozled after hearing this revelation. Because Saints were powerhouses no matter which empire or force.

And seven of them guarding just a weapon production company... It was something that even he couldn't digest easily.

But the second is very critical." he said and sighed.

"What are you talking about?" asked the emperor with a suspicious gaze.

"It's about the relationship between princess Venessa and the master Oakenshield's human disciple." replied the advisor and spoke in a grim voice...

"Kahn Salvatore."

Chapter 599 The Suspicion

Havi Hos Sigfreed, the current emperor of the Vulcan empire sat stunned on his throne as his loyal advisors informed him about two issues that even the emperor had to know of them.

The advisor fireborne continued.

"Firstly... those seven saints have questionable origins. Their appearance, their strength and even their weapons are very different." he continued his report.

"One is a 1st stage saint who goes by the name Jugram Diablos. He's a giant human who usually guards the entrance of the company, making a statement that no one can do any funny business there.

When the Hero's Party acted haughty and disrespectful, he pretended to be a semi-saint. But from the intel we received.. at the time of confrontation with the hero's party; he emitted saint pressure that is not seen in our or any of the neighboring empires at all.

His origins are unclear but some of our experts say that he has strength enough to fight a couple of saints of the same rank on his own.

"We fear that in terms of potential, he's already way ahead of most of the heirs and veteran warriors of the six Fireborne clans." spoke the advisor with a grim expression.

Obviously... none of them were aware that Jugram actually possessed a higher version of the True Demon bloodline called as Superior Chaos Demon.

And since the Vulcan empire was far away from the Demon Empire, they had no substantial information available about it. Thus, no one could make sense of Jugram's chaos elemental aura.

"And the biggest threat is their leader. As per our information... he goes by the name Omega Hrodvitnir.

Just like the former, even he has mysterious origins. And he is a legitimate 3rd stage saint himself.

Our spies reported that he has a very unique aura just like this Jugram Diablos. And this swordsman stopped one of the Hero's Party members, who is a first stage saint himself.

His special skill that was enough to destroy the whole company building was frozen still in the air as soon this Omega Hrodvitnir appeared on the scene.

And if our ancient records are correct... This is something only achievable by those who study the Gravity Law or have Telekinesis abilities since birth." accentuated the advisor.

"The only solid information we have on him is that he might have been born in the Erdve empire." he revealed.

"What makes you think that he's from the empire that serves the God of Space?" queried Havi with a curious gaze.

"Because of his weapons, your majesty.

He has 4 curved blades as his weapons... the one we know as Katanas. A signature weapon from the Erdve empire's culture and also the 6th Hero of Space was renowned for using a Katana instead of his divine weapon.

We all know how he transformed the empire 500 years ago and established his world's culture there.

If I'm not wrong, this Omega Hrodvitnir is what they call a Samurai Swordsman."

"I see... two saints with unexplainable origins and varying skills and abilities. They can't be natives.

What about the others?" asked the emperor with a thoughtful expression. In his mind, he was already thinking of many possibilities.

However, the fireborne advisor shook his head.

"We don't have any other information. No one has seen them and master Oakenshield has kept their identities secret.

But during the confrontation with the Hero's Party... they made their presence known.

And also... their attitude towards the Hero of Fire was totally disrespectful as if they didn't worry about offending him at all." said the advisor.

They were the imperial clan after all. Even though they couldn't barge into the Oakenshield company because of the attention on Throk... their spies managed to get enough information easily.

Little did they know... Kahn and Rathnaar had already planned to willingly provide them with this information.

Although only Church seemed like the issue when Axel and his gang of warriors knocked on their door and tried to make a scene... both of them were already farsighted to predict that sooner or later, the imperial clan would also do a background check on them.

That was why, Jugram and Omega, who were already exposed during that event purposely revealed their general information while adding their species as their surname.

To make the imperial authorities do the guesswork on their own while they kept going about their lives.

"Seven saints... with no prior information.

Even master Vivaldi has only 3 saints protecting him and his company." spoke the emperor as his voice turned grim.

"First, we thought it was either your highness Hector or Venessa. But they do not have that type of influence yet since none of them has been crowned officially...

And during the incident with the Hero's Party at the gates of the company building, it was princess Venessa who stopped the fight between these saints and the hero's party." he revealed and continued.

"But after that very day, the church officially announced their support to the blacksmith." he revealed and gave a cryptic look to the emperor as if implying something else.

"Ah... those bastards. They must think we're a bunch of children.

They had the Hero of Fire and his team pick a fight with the people of Oakenshield company's saints knowingly and create a scene as if they were at hostile to each other.

Venessa stopping the fight would make it look like it was the Imperial Clan who hired these outsiders or my children were the ones to do it.

In reality... it was the church all along who brought them in our empire." spoke Havi Hos Sigfreed who also misunderstood the situation just like Demiurges Val Arhlem, the pope himself.

"What is it that they could gain from this blacksmithing duel?" he wondered.

And now that the first issue was discussed... the advisor started sweating a bit as if he didn't want to talk more.

He gave a look at the other advisors but they all averted their eyes and looked in random directions.

One was intensely staring at the carvings on the chair he was seated on while the second was admiring the painting work done on the ceiling.

Sigh!

The advisor let out a deep sigh again and continued...

"But the biggest issue at hand isn't that at this moment.

It's the relationship between the princess and the disciple of master Oakenshield." spoke the fireborne advisor and declared in a grim voice...

"Kahn Salvatore." he emphasized again.

Previously, the emperor didn't seem that worried about this human disciple because the emergence of seven saints was a bigger issue since they were always rare no matter which empire it was.

Soon, the advisor gave a background report on Kahn... a normal human with no authority or standing who used to be a handyman and do small jobs such as acting as the Throk's substitute.

They even found about his first noticeable appearance in Oslo city, the main trading hub of the southern border where he filled in as Throk's representative and bought the body of the Jatvuarym for 40 trillion harlen.

And then how he got mixed up between Oakenshield and Tawerik after the former's students abandoned him and joined the latter's company because of Throk's beef with Rogis and the second prince having blacklisted him everywhere.

Their Intel even mentioned how Kahn was forced to sign up a contract against his will by Throk.

This was an altered story. In reality, it was Kahn who willingly volunteered.

"Skip to the main point." said the emperor as he found these details unnecessary.

The relationship between Throk, Hector and Venessa was already logical in his eyes.

But he knew nothing about Venessa's relationship with this human disciple.

"The thing is your majesty... in the past 10 months... the princess has personally met with this human disciple many times.

Among her supporters... we have a second stage saint who personally witnessed her trying to recruit this person as one of her vassals.

And he mentioned that she thinks of Kahn Salvatore as some business genius." informed the advisor.

This second stage saint the advisor spoke of was actually one of the two fireborne saints who were present with Venessa when she invited Kahn to recruit him.

Unbeknownst to her... he was one of the emperor's people himself. Someone they planted to keep an eye on his daughter.

"But after that incident... she has been meeting him quite a few times under the name of recruiting him since it's already given that he will lose the duel." spoke the advisor again.

"And what's so surprising about that? A loyal vassal is a backbone for any ruler." said Havi with uninterested eyes.

"Recently... we received intel acquired from the workers in the company that whenever the princess meets this Kahn Salvatore...

Their relationship seems to be very close." he said in a fearful tone.

To this, even the emperor rose his right eyebrow.

"And based on their behavior and how they treat each other during their 'meeting' which always involves both treating each other as equal and talk informally... or how they are always laughing and acting carefree around each other..." he spoke and almost froze on his spot while mustering the courage to speak their final conclusion.

"Princess Venessa seems to be in love with Kahn."

Chapter 600 The Lone Princess

One by one, the advisor started giving the details of Kahn and Venessa's encounters that they managed to learn about through the insider in Venessa's camp. And how her body language is always gleeful as if she has unearthed a lot of mental pressure from her shoulders.

Although, this seemed like an overstretched conclusion in the beginning... the more the emperor heard about their encounters, the more he started to worry.

Because this was completely opposite to how Venessa had behaved in 30 years of her life so far.

Havi was already aware of his daughter's upbringing.

Ever since her mother died, Venessa eventually faced a lot of scrutiny from the clansmen and those from the two fireborne clans whose heiresses were married to the emperor.

This made Venessa, an 8-year-old girl mature very quickly on her own and close her heart to the world in order to survive.

Because if not for her being the Emperor's daughter... she would've died long ago. Yet, the young girl who had no one to rely on; not even her own father... learned the hard truth of the world even before she came of age.

That in this world... power ruled everything!

It wasn't just physical strength or political power. And neither was it only some pretentious influence or position of authority.

Real power meant transcending above all these sectors and conquering them with an iron fist to the point where no one would even dare to look you right in the eyes or defy your orders.

That became the definition of the Absolute Power for Venessa.

The only thing she had ever since growing up was the Sigfreed family name and a small villa to live in where she received enough support from the imperial clan to live leisurely.

However... when her step-brothers were growing up while being doted and loved by their families... Venessa grabbed her mother's sword, her only memento and chose to practice swordsmanship.

The little girl in her died a long time ago. And now, only a woman who strived for power and determination to sit at the top remained.

And hence, to see her smile freely and act happy after having relaxing conversations with Kahn after every time they met... made everyone including the emperor feel that it was not just any normal relationship but a...

Connection of hearts.

Unbeknownst to everyone, Venessa had a different outlook on her association with Kahn.

Because of her being a half-human and also losing all support from her mother's side after her death along with the emperor leaving Venessa alone to fend off for herself... She had put up a guard against everything.

There were times when she let people in and became friends with them... only to find that they had ulterior motives and wanted to use her because of her heritage for their personal gain.

She learned the hard way that once people do not see any merit in having a connection with you... they will abandon you as soon as they see a better alternative.

Hence, till this point... she never really had friends growing up or wholeheartedly trusted anyone because of her own goals.

Many people gave credit to her bloodline being stronger compared to her brothers but no one knew how hard it was for Venessa to learn everything by herself.

That when girls of her played house, she was struggling to lift a heavy sword. When they dreamed of being a princess and getting saved by a prince charming... Venessa's palms were full of callousness and her fingers bled as she practiced with her mother's sword.

Many staked their future on her after seeing her potential and rise to strength in the past 10 years. But no one was there when she trained day and night, for months and then years.

The only thing she had to learn and perfect her skills were her mother's sword and a book that had her family's swordsmanship techniques.

Just based on these two things... Venessa struggled, she stumbled and she got up, again and again to reach where she was now.

She chose to defy this fate that was forced on her and now that she knew her mother was strategically killed by the other two prince's clans... the fire in her heart raged more intensely.

Venessa was well aware that she was a hot-headed person because she had a controlling personality.

Not because she was a control freak but she grew up being vigilant about everything around her. Thus, once she set her mind to achieve something... she would not stop no matter what.

However... there was this one human called Kahn Salvatore.

Ever since she met him... he was the only person who never had any malicious intentions towards her and expected any form of gain from her.

He even rejected her offer to join her side despite her pestering him a dozen times.

And the more they interacted... the more indifference he showed towards her.

Normally... everyone would gentle down their tone, bow their heads and treat her better than their own parents as soon as Venessa appeared in front of them...

But in the case of this human... he treated her like she was a nuisance.

Forget honorifics... Kahn didn't even call her with any titles and complained when she pulled him out of his training forcefully using her identity.

While others, including her retainers, gave a sense of hidden intentions... Kahn was least interested in her life.

In the beginning... it made her furious and filled her heart with hatred.

Now, for some reason... he was the only person she felt relaxed and carefree around.

Venessa also guessed a while ago through their interactions that Kahn didn't have any romantic feelings for her.

Given her beauty... even the firebornes who hated humans desired her but this human... always looked like he had a yearning for someone else in his heart.

Just in their previous meeting, she asked about it and Kahn told her that there was indeed someone in his life. But as things stood... they could not be together and had to strive towards their own goals.

Him honestly expressing his feelings made Venessa trust Kahn even more and she too started telling him about her life once in a while.

As their conversations got personal... Venessa found one thing common in her and Kahn.

That both of them were Survivors.

Although Kahn never went into details and only offered vague words... she understood that he had a past of his own and secrets he couldn't tell anyone.

And knowing how secretive he was... Venessa never tried to pry into his personal affairs. Just knowing that he had no ill intentions towards her was more than enough.

Just like that... Venessa, for the first time in her life, had found a... Friend.

In the main throne hall of the emperor... a woman in green and white armor while having a sword strapped on her waist walked in towards the end of the hall.

She had her gaze full of curiosity as she looked at the being who was seated on the throne... Havi Hos Sigfreed, her biological father and the reigning emperor.

Schwoa!!

A burgundy-red aura was emitted from his body and in an instant, it encapsulated the entire one kilometer long hall as the emperor gave an uneasy expression towards his daughter.

Soon, everything around her including the pillars that supported the hall, the chairs, different seats and platforms and even the ceiling caught fire in a few seconds.

However, Only the emperor and Venessa remained untouched while the rest of the hall became a pit of fire as the emperor used his Domain.

Yet despite this method of asserting dominance that would've made others instantly cower in fear... Venessa had an indifferent expression.

Her unbothered countenance piqued the Emperor's interests and he spoke in a grim voice.

"Do you know why I called you here?"

To the emperor's tyrannical voice that was enough to make anyone fear for their life... Venessa let out a sigh.

"May I know why I have been summoned... Lord Father?" she asked, still treating this matter casually.

Venessa had no respect for this fireborne seated on the other side. There was nothing fatherly he ever did for her.

There was even a time when she hadn't met him face to face for over a decade when she was training on her own.

Forget trying to console his grieving daughter after her mother's death... this father of hers never showed his face until she came of age and joined the military to gain experience and raise her strength.

Only after becoming a commander and gaining the support of the generals did her father acknowledge her existence as his daughter.

For others, he was their absolute ruler and a being only second to their god Hetrax... but for Venessa, he was a failure excuse of a father and a husband.

"What is your relationship with Oakenshield's disciple?" he asked.

Venessa suddenly had a surprised expression as this question did come out of nowhere.

"Why does my relationship with anyone concern lord father?" she asked in return.

To her subliminally defying words... Havi released some of his saint pressure... the aura of an 8th stage saint that was enough to crumble a mountain into small sand grains.

"Whatever it is... stay away from him. You have an important part to play for the future of our empire.

Getting mixed with someone of commoner birth must be avoided no matter what." he said to Venessa who was forced to kneel on the foot.

And finally, he gave a warning in a grim voice.

"Unless you want him to get killed."