





(L-Lady Ch-Chastille, please mind the way you're speaking!)

(As diminutive as we are, even using our lives as a shield won't be enough to protect you!)

(Gaaah, how unsightly. Did we not swear among us that we would throw our lives away for Lady Chastille's sake!?)

The three knights were making a clamor in hushed voices, but as Raphael glanced over to them, they violently trembled and shut their mouths.

Did that ruin his mood? This was the Angelic Knight who had killed the most sorcerers in the world. Chastille did not think that he would feel any hesitation in killing an apostate ally given his body count. Honestly, she had made her resolution to have her head separated from her body today.

Thinking back on it, the reason she was walking around town when she had to meet this man may have been because she wanted to talk with someone one last time.

Running across Zagan and Nephy there... was far too good of a coincidence, though.

...Well, she did end up in shock and tears at the fact that he didn't even remember.

And yet, Raphael took on a defiant attitude and let out a hearty laugh as if amusing himself with Chastille.

"Haahaahaa! It has been a long time since someone let their mouth run in front of me. It may, in fact, be a first for a woman as well. How pleasant. You may boast of that in hell."

With a crack, the air froze over.

Like I thought, it's come to this... Tch! With a sword used only for show hanging at her waist, Chastille was basically unarmed. To Raphael, it wouldn't change the fact that he could crush her underfoot like an insect.

"U-UWAAAH, please run away, Lady Chastille!" The three Angelic Knights sprang forth. However, they were far too powerless to take on this giant of a man. And at that exact moment...

"Lord Raphael, what exactly are you doing to my Angelic Knights, pray tell?" The one who let out a roar at the giant of a knight was an elderly cardinal.

Rough steps came rushing over from deeper within the cathedral where the cardinal's office was.

"Hmph. Clavwell, is it? I have no business with a man who can't think of anything that isn't written upon paper."

"Even if you have no business with me, I have a sworn duty to protect the Angelic Knights under my care. Know that you shall not be permitted to do as you please here."

Hearing such reliable words made Chastille think tears were about to spill from her eyes.

As for Raphael, he stared back at the cardinal without showing any hint of respect.

"More importantly, bastard... it seems you revoked this one's access to her Sacred Sword?"

"It was not revoked, but is merely being kept in custody temporarily."

"Isn't that the same thing? Where is it?"

And in response to that, Clavwell returned an unconvinced gaze.

"... And what do you intend to do upon learning its location?"

"You know full well. A sword only has value when it is wielded. Is there any meaning to stowing it in a sheath and using it as a gaudy decoration?"

Clavwell then questioned him in a quiet tone, as if searching for the significance of his words.

"Are you, by any chance, requesting that I return it to Chastille?"

"That does not even need to be said. The Sacred Sword chooses its wielder of its own will. As long as the wielder is alive, no other may wield it," Raphael paused there for a moment, then glanced over to Chastille and continued, "Though, that only applies as long as Chastille still draws breath. She would lose custody of it if the life was choked out of her, for example," he expanded on his

point, making a gruesome smile as if saying that he would happily take on such a role as he did.

"What a repulsive response!" Clavwell exclaimed, then stepped back in shock. And, as Clavwell mimed the sign of the cross in front of his chest and returned a glare at him, Raphael spoke out without any signs of timidness.

"What are you so frightened of? Am I not simply stating facts? In the first place, you bastards have no right to interject into how a wielder of a Sacred Sword brandishes their blade. All you need do is think about how to deal with the damn aftermath," he claimed. The way he was speaking made it sound like as long as one was acknowledged by a Sacred Sword, then even a massacre would be permitted.

This is... the most dreadful Archangel...

Scolding the weak portions of herself that wanted to falter, Chastille forced her way out in front of Raphael.

"You have gone too far, Lord Raphael. If we were to wield our swords only to fulfill our base desires, then that in itself would be heresy!" Chastille roared, her hands trembling in fear all the while. And as she gripped them tightly, she glared at Raphael.

"Oh, so you would speak sharply at me not just once, but even twice, huh?" Raphael muttered like he was enjoying himself, then shifted his focus over to the cardinal.

"In any case, is this fine, Clavwell? One of those damn Angelic Knights that you should be protecting is on the verge of losing her life here."

"Ugh..."

Clavwell knew there was a distinct possibility that many could cut down Chastille right where she stood, so he could do nothing but let out a groan.

But why is he trying to make me take up the Sacred Sword? If his goal was just an execution, then it would have been fine to just cut her down immediately. He already had more than enough just cause to do so, after all.

Then, is he just trying to make sport of me resisting? She didn't want to think

that such a man was chosen by a Sacred Sword, but she couldn't think of anything else.

"...Understood. Chastille, follow me," Clavwell said. And, as if he was beaten down by Raphael's persistence, he invited Chastille into the depths of the cathedral.

On the other side of the door was a red carpet laid across the floor, and several doors were lined up leading to the offices of the cardinal and the Angelic Knights. At the very end was a gate with busts modeled after angels protecting it on each side, along with two Angelic Knights serving as guards.

As one would expect, Raphael and the three Angelic Knights did not follow them. And after verifying that, Cardinal Clavwell whispered to Chastille.

"Whether or not it is correct to return this to you at present is something that even I do not know. By some chance, this may just give that man a pretext to kill you, even."

"...I am fully aware," Chastille claimed. She didn't know what Raphael's true motives were, but it likely wouldn't end up in a situation where Chastille couldn't even wield a sword, at the very least.

Making Clavwell return her Sacred Sword seemed more like a move designed to protect her, rather than an attempt to make an example to others.

As they eventually arrived at the angel's gate, the Angelic Knights who served as gatekeepers blocked their path.

"Your Eminence Clavwell, what business do you have here?"

"The time has come to return the Sacred Sword to Chastille. Please open the path."

The two gatekeepers exchanged glances, but immediately moved off to the sides. The cardinal was the chief executive of the church they were in, so they could do naught to obstruct his path.

And, as he proceeded onward, the two gatekeepers stood before Chastille.

"As for you, please wait here."

By all rights, it was a disrespectful attitude toward her, but Chastille

obediently waited where she was. And before long, Clavwell returned with her sword in hand.

"I shall have faith that you will cut through any trials with your own two hands," he said, then placed the Sacred Sword in Chastille's hands.



Evening. A bar in Kianoides.

"Hyahyahyahyahya! You adopted a kid, seriously?" The one letting out a vulgar laugh was Zagan's undesirable friend, Barbatos.

After he finished procuring new books from Archdemon Palace, Zagan was called out by his undesirable friend and returned to town on his own right after arriving home.

Nephy and Foll should be finishing up dinner right around now, right...?

Since he was called out to a bar, he told Nephy that he wouldn't need dinner. And now, Zagan was questioning whether there was any meaning in coming here when he had to miss out on his time with them. However, while he was asking himself that, Barbatos' stupid laugh continued to echo.

As one would expect, Zagan responded in a sharp tone.

"...Why do you even know that?"

"Gerageragera. You know, Zagan, why don't you try speaking after looking at your own fucking face in a mirror? If people heard that an evil looking ass like you was walking about with an innocent looking brat, then it would turn into an uproar over a kidnapping, right!?"

Zagan didn't know how widely the rumors had spread, but it seemed that him walking around with Foll had become the talk of the town.

Well, the number of people who would mess with Foll should decrease in proportion to that, at least...

There were no humans out there who would dare incur his displeasure while knowing his name. If there were any, then at most it would just be the Angelic Knights of the church, but even they were not foolish enough to challenge him without the means to do so.

It was more than enough that word was spreading around that Foll was under his patronage. And it seemed Barbatos had summoned Zagan to verify the truth behind those rumors.

"...Can I go back now?"

"Oh, come on, don't be so damn cold. Didn't I just let you drink all that quality booze? At least share some gossip on the side. Can't hurt, right?"

It seemed that he was already completely drunk before Zagan even came over. And as his unhealthy looking face turned redder from the liquor, Barbatos wrapped his arm around Zagan in good humor.

Having said that, the alcohol really was delicious. It was the first time Zagan tasted a spirit poured atop a lump of ice, and the mild sweetness mixed into the feeling of his throat burning was so pleasant that it made him unintentionally let out a sigh.

Would Nephy drink this kind of thing? If he was going to drink some anyway, then rather than this irritating man, he would prefer to share it with that lovely girl. And he now wanted to bring a bottle back with him as a present.

As he came to his sense, Zagan forced back Barbatos, who had his arm around him in an overly familiar fashion.

"...You're filthy. Also, if it's liquor, then just bring it to the castle. I'm busy looking after my disciple."

"Haaa, I bet you just wanna get all fucking lovey-dovey with that elven slave of yours."

"I-I'm not doing anything like that, you hear!?"

"The hell?" Barbatos said, picking his nose and rolling his eyes at Zagan as he did.

Can I just... slug this guy and throw him away? Without paying any mind at all to that cold gaze being returned to him, Barbatos began slapping Zagan's shoulder repeatedly.

"So, just what is that rumored brat, exactly? It's not your damn hobby to use sacrifices, right? Then is she a pet? You're not gonna tell me she's another

goddamn disciple, are you?"

"...Look, she's someone you're familiar with, you know?"

"What? So she's a sorcerer? She is a woman, right?" Barbatos asked, then folded his arms and thought deeply on the matter.

"If it's a female sorcerer, then around here it would be Enchantress Gremory? But everyone knows she's a severe man hater. Plus, she ain't a kid. But other than that one..."

Watching Barbatos groan over the situation made Zagan feel secretly relieved.

If this guy hasn't noticed, then the fact that Foll's a dragon hasn't been leaked, huh?

It was likely only a matter of time before others realized Foll was a dragon. Seeing her sorcery... or rather, her partial transformation into a dragon, would make it clear that she was Valefor.

It was an inevitable outcome, but it was still too early for that. After all, Zagan still had enemies.

Zagan's name, as an Archdemon, was already well known, and those who would find that unacceptable and attack him were all gone. Just as he planned, both sorcerers and Angelic Knights should have known that it was not worth scheming against him.

Even so, it wasn't perfect. There were certainly still sorcerers out there waiting for the brand new Archdemon to trip up and make use of that opening. Sorcerers who possessed sufficient power to do so did exist. And so, it would still take a little more time to make them give up as well.

Counterbalancing their lives on a scale, there was the name, legacy, and mana of the 'Archdemon,' after all.

That's why... I may still need one more foil.

Zagan needed something that would strike fear into the hearts of all other sorcerers. With Nephy, and now Foll, there were two things he had to protect no matter what.

And while he was thinking of such things, Barbatos, who was simply groaning thus far, suddenly let out an 'Ah.'

"Oh yeah, Valefor!"

Zagan's body stiffened up with a start.

This guy... figured out Foll's identity? And then, feigning composure, Zagan tilted his head to the side.

"What are you talking about?"

"No, a little while ago, Valefor should have launched an attack on your place, right? That big guy with the mask and armor."

"...Ah. Yeah, he did, now that you mention it."

After getting accustomed to Foll as she was now, Zagan completely forgot that she and the Valefor who attacked him were one and the same.

"What about it?"

As Zagan tilted his head to the side, Barbatos made a disconcerted face.

"So it's not even worth remembering? There's a rumor that he's missing, but what happened in the end? Did you finish him off?"

"Who knows? How I finish off intruders is something you know full well, right?"

And while Zagan replied as if dodging the question, Barbatos looked up at the ceiling.

"Man, what a waste. There's a rumor floating around that he's actually a dragon. His corpse would've made for some good catalysts, you hear?"

Precisely because such people existed, Foll's identity had to be kept secret. Upon hearing his words, Zagan simply nodded as if he had no interest in them at all.

"Oh, now that you mention it, I think I've heard that before."

"What's that? You knew and *still* threw him out somewhere? Let me ask just in case, but is he dead?"

"If he's lucky, shouldn't he be alive?" Zagan replied in as much of a cool expression as he could muster, and Barbatos clicked his tongue as he backed off.

Eventually, after throwing back another mug of beer, Barbatos responded.

"So it's just as always? Well, whatever. Forget Valefor, let's talk about that brat you're dragging along. Who is it?"

This guy isn't saying this crap while knowing already, right...? Since the correct answer had been guessed already, Zagan shrugged his shoulders while enduring his impulse to make a sullen face.

"... Who knows? Just think of her as an adopted child or something."

"Gehyahyahyahyaa! An adopted kid... Adopted... Buhyahyahaha!"

... This guy's hopeless.

And just as Zagan was seriously thinking of slugging his undesirable friend, who was laughing to the point where there were tears in his eyes... Barbatos made a grave expression.

"Well, let's cut the jokes here, shall we?"

"...So you've finally come to the real issue at hand, then?"

Even this man didn't have enough free time to just call out Zagan because he wanted to gossip.

"It seems a troublesome guy arrived at the church. I thought I'd give you a heads-up."

"A troublesome guy?"

"A wielder of a Sacred Sword. It's not like that girl from last time, got it? This one's far more dangerous."

It seemed an Archangel other than Chastille had arrived. The thought made Zagan let out a deep breath with a 'Hooo.'

"For them to move the Sacred Swords... The church is coming out in force, huh? Are they thinking of striking down the brand new Archdemon or what?"

The discord between the church and sorcerers spanned a thousand years. Of

course, within that long history, collisions between Archdemons and Archangels happened many times.

However, though there were records of Archangels repelling Archdemons, there were no records of any defeating one.

That was why, though the Archangels were able to deter Archdemons, they were unable to kill them. That was even a common understanding between the sorcerers and the church. It was only natural for the church to think of overturning that fact, however.

Barbatos then made a troubled expression.

"I wonder... This new Archangel who came over is quite the odd one. At any rate, he's the monster with the highest kill count of sorcerers in history."

"...He's not a gentle one, I see."

"Damn straight. The number of sorcerers he's killed is 499, and I don't know what's got him so ticked off, but there are calculations out there that say he kills a sorcerer every three days. And so, you've been chosen as celebratory number 500!"

Hearing that extraordinary number made Zagan knit his brows. After all, if it was a number published by someone from the church, then it was likely somewhat exaggerated, but Barbatos wasn't the type of man to speak of such nonsense.

Zagan then hung his head down in thought.

"How strange. Even if he's a wielder of a Sacred Sword, could he really kill 500 sorcerers on his own?"

Among sorcerers, the difference between those who only held the bare minimum amount of power and Archdemon candidates was like the difference between heaven and earth.

If an Archdemon candidate possessed 10000 circuits, then the circuits of a novice sorcerer would at most be a mere 100. Even if one were to kill 100 novices, an Archdemon candidate could easily defeat them if challenged. But if there were a total of 499 people, then he'd surely faced more than just one or

two Archdemon candidates.

Taking that further, even among Archdemon candidates, someone like Barbatos would hold more than 20000 circuits. When it came to normal skill as a sorcerer, the hopeless man before Zagan's eyes was far better than him.

It wasn't like Chastille revealed her entire hand when she faced Barbatos the other day, but even so, if she fought against an Archdemon candidate he didn't think she would get off lightly.

Does he have an ace up his sleeve other than the Sacred Sword? And while Zagan was perplexed by that thought, Barbatos set aside his mug and formed a smile.

"About that, it's said that he killed a dragon and ate it."

"...Huh?" Zagan said, puzzled, and almost reflexively shot out of his seat.

"Is that... true?"

"Yeah. The church doesn't recognize the predation of dragons, after all. It's unofficial information, but it seems that it's really true that he cut down a dragon. If he gained the power of a dragon, then it ain't all that impossible for him to kill so many sorcerers, right?"

Shit, so that's it... Zagan cursed bitterly in his mind.

"What's strange... about a sorcerer hating Angelic Knights?" Foll had some sort of grudge against Angelic Knights. Also, from the moment he met her, she desired an unnatural amount of power despite being a sorcerer and a dragon. And then there was a dragon killing Angelic Knight.

It wasn't like it was completely certain. But even so, hoping for the good fortune that these facts were completely unrelated was quite unreasonable.

After that, Zagan took a glance at and scowled toward Barbatos.

"You're being awfully generous with your information today..."

"Well, think of it as an apology for last time. Or something like a tribute to you, even. Rather than make an enemy of you, I'll be able to sip at sweeter nectar by going along on your wild ride."

"...You sure can talk."

Acting disconcerted by that, Zagan then poured some spirit into his glass.

"I'm quite skilled, you know? I doubt this is all too bad an offer."

"If you were such an admirable person, then I may even trust you a little... So, what do you want?" Zagan knocked back the spirit and asked him that, but Barbatos simply let out a laugh with a 'Hehehe.'

"The Eldest's legacy, could you try leaving its management to me? Anyhow, he's a sorcerer who lived for a thousand years. Even if we simply call it a legacy, it shouldn't be just some ordinary amount. It's too much for you to manage all on your own, right?"

Having Barbatos hit the bull's eye in an unpleasant spot made Zagan unable to hide his sullen face. However, he didn't hesitate at all in answering.

"Rejected."

"The hell was that!?"

"...You'd just go and hide anything that's inconvenient for me to see."

"Isn't that obvious? What's wrong with that?" Barbatos stared back at Zagan in wonder, as if there was no need to say such a thing after all this time.

Why is it that he can be so stupid despite knowing so much...? On the contrary, it was Zagan who came to a worrisome understanding.

"...Haaa. I'll split a few writings on sorcery from the legacy with you. Just keep yourself happy with that."

"Well, I guess that's good enough. Man, having a lavish friend really is the best," Barbatos said, then slammed his mug into Zagan's glass and made a toast all on his own.

After that, the atmosphere in the shop froze over. The door to the bar opened, and a certain guest came in. Since Barbatos had his back to the door, he didn't realize this and continued to talk in high spirits.

"But I'll be the one to decide which I'll be taking, got it? If you hand me some shitty writing on sorcery just 'cause it's from the Eldest's legacy, then I won't

even look at it!"

"...By the way, Barbatos."

"What?"

Lifting up his glass of spirit, Zagan questioned Barbatos while gazing at the customer who came in through the glass.

"That Angelic Knight you talked about just now, what does he look like?"

"Ah, let's see... I hear he's a huge man that you wouldn't think is an old fart. Also, he's got a huge scar across his face. Heard he got it from the dragon he killed."

"Really, now...?" While looking at the customer who entered the bar, Zagan let out an agreeable response. And then, taking one more sip of his drink, he made an expression like it was bothersome as he asked Barbatos one more question.

"So about that scar, does it cut across deeply from his left cheek to his right brow?"

"Huh? Well, yeah, I did hear it looked something like that. You sure know a lot about him, huh?"

"It's a complete coincidence, but I've seen a man with very similar features."

"Wow man, I'm surprised you got out alive. He's a guy who seems to only have killing sorcerers on his mind, you know? If he spotted you, then he'd probably come slashing in right away."

Zagan continued to gaze behind Barbatos, who was letting out his 'geragera' laugh again.

"It seems... that part comes next."

"Huh...?" At that, Barbatos finally seemed to notice Zagan's gaze. And as he looked over his shoulder, his face turned completely pale.

Because standing there... was a large man with a scarred face carrying a Sacred Sword.

"Raphael Hyurandell...!" Knocking down his chair, Barbatos shot up. And without sparing him a single glance, the scar-faced Angelic Knight looked straight at Zagan.

Has he come to take my head all of a sudden? The power of the Sacred Sword was troublesome, but it was conceited to think a single one on its own could strike down an Archdemon. If he was such a fool, then he would not have lived so long.

As Zagan knit his brows from being unable to read the Angelic Knight's aim, Barbatos raised a trembling voice.

"Y-You son of a bitch, why are you here!?"

The scar-faced Angelic Knight then finally shifted his attention over to Barbatos. And as he did, a smile formed on his brusque face that looked like a rocky surface. From that fiendish expression, the unlucky bar owner's daughter, who was behind Barbatos, let out a scream to the point of fainting.

Even though he hadn't looked directly at her, his sight had such power behind it. And facing that smile, which already made one feel a physical pressure, Barbatos resolved himself as he roared.

"U-UOOOOOH, I'll fucking do it!" The light of mana lit up in both of Barbatos' hands, and the scar-faced Angelic Knight also put his hand on the hilt of the Sacred Sword at his back.

"Stop that, Barbatos," Zagan said as he placed his glass on the table with a clunk. And the moment he did, the mana pouring out of Barbatos' hands vanished. It wasn't like he actually stopped or anything, though. No, Zagan had 'eaten' it.

After that, Zagan lightly waved his finger in the air, and the chair Barbatos knocked over returned to its original position.

"Well, take a seat. The liquor will lose its taste."

"The hell are you taking it so fucking easy for!? You planning on just quietly getting killed?"

In response to Barbatos howling as if his fear had been overturned by anger,

Zagan shook his head like it was all just too bothersome.

"That guy there... doesn't really seem to want to fight, you know?"

"The fuck? He's got his hand right on his sword, don't he!?"

"Isn't that because you picked a fight?"

After Barbatos began invoking sorcery, the scar-faced Angelic Knight gripped his sword. And Zagan did not overlook that fact.

Besides, I can't sense any bloodthirst or hostility, either.

Both Nephy and Foll didn't really specialize at expressing emotion. No, in Foll's case, rather than not expressing emotion, she simply didn't speak enough. That was why this method of sensing intent was known to him. In any case, there were many things that couldn't be known just by looking at their faces.

That was why, when it came to what they were thinking, and what they wanted him to do, Zagan had ended up developing a habit of looking at the subtleties of emotion by observing them and taking in such things.

The scar-faced Angelic Knight then made a smile that looked like it split the earth.

"The Archdemon this time around... is quite the composed one, I see."

"An Archdemon won't make a racket over every little thing."

Although, sensing no hostility from such dreadfulness was quite strange in itself, and Zagan was unable to hide his bewilderment.

Eventually, Zagan looked at the chair he raised with sorcery. It seemed that in such a situation, Barbatos had no intention to get back to drinking, and even after the Angelic Knight let go of his sword, Barbatos would not take his seat.

"It appears we have an empty seat. Will you join us?"

"Hooo... What an amusing man."

Straining his scarred face fiendishly, the Angelic Knight sat down in the seat across from Zagan. Barbatos created some space as if to avoid him.

Rather, you should be the one talking here. I don't have anything to talk about with this stone-faced man, you know? Zagan ended up telling the man to take a

seat by just kind of going with the flow, but he didn't really have any sort of goal in mind.

Or rather, since his time with Nephy was completely lost, he only wanted to at least enjoy some liquor. But despite that, Barbatos was backing off as if saying that he wanted to be excused from getting involved with any of it. On the contrary...

"Shit, why does a sorcerer like me have go through this kinda crap?"

"Mr. S-Sorcerer, could you maybe save my daughter?"

"Like I know. Healing sorcery is outside my field of expertise, but I'll at least do what I can."

"Oooh... I should've expected as much from Master Zagan's attendant."

"I'm not a damn attendant!" While cursing at the man who seemed to be the owner of the bar, he began nursing the girl who had fainted. Since she'd only lost consciousness, Zagan didn't think there was any need to go as far as to use sorcery, though.

I also wanna go over there, but... The woman Zagan had set his heart on was none other than Nephy, but when it came to deciding between this stone-faced man and the owner's daughter, it didn't even need to be said which he'd rather be stuck with.

Having said that, nothing would be accomplished by just constantly glaring at Barbatos. And so, Zagan finally turned about to face the Angelic Knight.

"So, what do you want with me, dragon killer?"

"It's Raphael," he replied, pouring some spirit into a glass as he did. His hand was enormous to the point where the bottle looked like a miniature to him.

"I've heard that my fellows owe you much, so I came to take a look at your face."

He was likely talking about Chastille, which made Zagan shrug his shoulders like it was no big deal.

"My face is nothing compared to yours, is it?"

"Fuhaha, even you've got quite the evil face, just as those damn rumors said, don't you?"

Zagan was self-conscious about his villainous features, so he felt a little down. Still, as if glossing that over, he knocked back his glass.



"I've heard that it's your hobby to kill sorcerers, so is it alright to put it off for today? There are two sorcerers here before your very eyes."

The girl seemed mostly fine now, so Zagan asked Raphael that question to prevent his undesirable friend's quick exit. Barbatos, who was about to place his hand on the door, looked back at him with a sullen expression.

After Raphael finished the spirit in his glass in a single swig, he let out a hearty laugh.

"Worthless. All I did was shake off the sparks that happened to fall before me, but those around me saw fit to kick up a big fuss."

Zagan then tilted his head to the side curiously.

Somehow, he's different from what Barbatos was saying. He was a homicidal maniac who had killed nearly 500 sorcerers, or so the rumors claimed. Due to that, Zagan was prepared to have him come slashing in gleefully, but unexpectedly, they were sharing an ordinary conversation.

Perhaps he had come to weigh out Zagan's capabilities? And as Zagan hit upon that notion and once more took a sip from his glass, Raphael was the one to open his mouth to speak.

"It seems you had a quarrel with Chastille, right? Why didn't you kill her?"

Sensing a sort of discomfort in the Angelic Knight's words, Zagan knit his brows.

"You're saying that as if she didn't have any chance of winning, huh?"

Chastille may not have been a good match for him, but even so, their pride as wielders of Sacred Swords should not have allowed them to speak like they couldn't win against a sorcerer. Zagan at the time wasn't yet an Archdemon, either.

However, Raphael simply let out a snort with a 'hmph' in response.

"Then let me ask you in return, was she strong enough to rival a bastard like you?"

"Who knows... However, she was the strongest among the humans I've faced

so far. I'm sure of that, at least."

Sure, even Barbatos had managed to capture her, but Zagan had also yet to see Chastille seriously swing her sword. Zagan had faced off against both of them before, so he found it doubtful that Barbatos would win if they both fought head-on.

After being given that reply, Raphael narrowed his eyes like a blade.

"I see. Then that means she has become sufficient enough a threat to the church, does it?"

"Huh...? I don't see where you're going with that... What are you talking about?"

It sounded to Zagan like he was saying that Chastille was an enemy of the church. And hearing Zagan's confusion made Raphael's stone-like face twist into the shape of a smile once more.

"She raised an objection to the subjugation of an Archdemon. That is more than enough reason for the church to decide on her execution. They even went as far as revoking her Sacred Sword for a spell... A foolish decision, I must say. As long as the wielder of a Sacred Sword is left alive, the next Angelic Knight won't be able to succeed them."

Hearing that made Zagan open his eyes wide.

That girl is too damn honest! It would have been fine if she just arbitrarily matched what those around her were doing, and yet, it seemed she revolted in a foolishly brazen manner. Not only that, she covered for Zagan.

With his head in his hands, Zagan let out a deep sigh.

"...I did think she didn't seem the type to live a long life."

"Yeah, seriously. I even went and warned her, but I guess she just didn't listen."

Raphael spoke like he somehow pitied her. And in response, Zagan opened his eyes wide as an unexpected thought ran through his mind.

Does this guy plan on killing Chastille? If it was said that his hobby was killing sorcerers, then it only stood to reason that he would also gladly execute Angelic

Knights who covered for sorcerers.

Zagan felt like he finally understood the reason why he sensed no bloodthirst from him at all.

So he came here to verify the connection between me and Chastille, then? In other words, he was looking for justification to kill Chastille.

The one connected to her wasn't Zagan, but Nephy. However, it wouldn't be strange to take the statement just now as if he was.

He got me. Zagan let out a groan as he realized he'd been played like a fiddle. And at that exact moment, Raphael stood up.

"Now then, I no longer have any damn business with you. I shall take my leave."

"...Wait," Zagan muttered, well aware that his voice had grown cold.

"Do you need something?" Raphael said as he turned around, sporting a gaze that made it clear he would cut Zagan down if he made even a single wrong choice in words.

"Chastille seems to be rather well loved within this town. She has many friends here, too. There would be no small number who would grieve her death, I assure you."

Nephy and Manuela would definitely be thrown into the depths of despair. That was why Zagan informed him of that fact in an overbearing manner.

"This town is my domain. If you go too far doing whatever you please, then I'll crush and grind you into the ground, got it?"

It didn't matter whether she was part of the church or that she was an Angelic Knight. As long as Chastille lived in Kianoides, she was Zagan's property. And if this man was saying that he would willfully kill her, then Zagan would crush him. Simple as that. That was what it meant to be under Zagan's protection.

The two reasons why he didn't do it right then and there was because there was a mountain of 'citizens that could be used as shields' around them, and also he was still in the middle of enjoying a drink. If the bar was destroyed, he could repair it with sorcery, but he knew it was difficult to repair people.

However, that was simply a reason for him not wanting to fight, and wasn't a reason for him not to fight.

It's a pain in the ass to avoid the shields while slugging him, though...

And perhaps having understood what Zagan was getting at, Raphael opened his eyes wide as if he found his actions rather unexpected.

"That doesn't seem like a thing an Archdemon would say, now does it?"

"Precisely because I am an Archdemon, I am arrogant."

And as he replied so haughtily, Raphael burst into a hearty laughter.

"Hahaha, as I thought, you're exactly the type of man I was hoping you'd be. That's exactly it. The 'evil' that the church must exterminate."

What he sensed from Raphael was not bloodthirst, but exaltation.

Meaning he doesn't think that sorcerers are even people, huh?

It was the same as hunting in his eyes. After all, when hunting beasts one harbored neither bloodthirst nor hostility. They only got excited by the kill itself.

And, as Raphael formed a smile that seemed to challenge Zagan, he left the bar.

Released from the tension, the customers in the bar all let out a sigh of relief. Eventually, while throwing a sidelong glance at Barbatos, who plunked back down into his seat, Zagan muttered something.

"...I don't like it."

"There's no way a sorcerer would like anything to do with an Angelic Knight, right? Wouldn't it be better to go and fucking kill him right now?"

Zagan let out a small sigh as he watched Barbatos whine.

"...I guess. Then go, Barbatos."

Barbatos opened his mouth in shock as he heard those words.

"Hey, you just told me to go and die, didn't you?"

"Not really. It's true that I'd like you to die, but don't misunderstand."

"So you do want me dead?"

Finding his teary-eyed, undesirable friend bothersome as he watched him, Zagan shook his head.

"I told you not to misunderstand, didn't I? I want you to go check on Chastille's condition."

Barbatos' second name was Purgatory.

Purgatory referred to the plane that existed between heaven and hell, but in the same vein, it was also something akin to a valley between dimensions that had a controlling presence over the strange space given birth to by sorcery.

And his second name came from the fact that he could freely come and go from that space.

Whether it be the ability he used when he abducted Nephy and Chastille, or the power he used to easily hijack Zagan's teleportation circle, this man was a sorcerer who excelled at teleportation and summoning. It would be a trifle for him to just hide and protect Chastille.

That's probably why he managed to pull off something like summoning a demon, huh?

It wasn't by a large margin, but as Zagan was now, it would be difficult to mimic Barbatos. Perhaps he could manage by borrowing the power of the Sigil of the Archdemon, but that wasn't good enough.

And so, Zagan uttered his request, but Barbatos bluntly made a face like he didn't want any part of it.

"What? Why should I?"

"I'll add some extra to your tip. Whatever, just go already."

Barbatos then made a face like he found this turn of events rather unexpected.

"Are you seriously planning on saving a damn Angelic Knight?"

"The enemy of my enemy is my friend... is something that is often said. Besides, don't you think it'd be amusing to put a wielder of a Sacred Sword in my debt?" "Man, I think you're definitely gonna fucking regret this, you hear?" Even as he cursed out toward Zagan, Barbatos did not refuse his offer.

And just like that, Barbatos sank into his own shadow. He likely moved over to the Purgatory that was his namesake. And from there, he would be able to investigate Chastille's circumstances.

Zagan, however, was left taken aback.

"...That ass just up and left without paying the bill."

Zagan had been the one who ordered him to leave, but somehow it felt like he had just been tricked.



By the time Zagan returned to the castle, it was already about time for the next day to begin.

I wonder if Nephy and Foll are already sleeping? Nephy woke up early in the mornings. If she was still awake at this hour, then it would affect her the following day, but even so, it was a little lonely for Zagan to come back and not hear her voice.

If he wanted to just see her face, then it was fine to take a peek in her bedroom, but Nephy's room was on the top floor. If she heard the sounds of him coming up the stairs, he would end up waking her. That was why he returned to the throne room while making as little sound as he could, but...

(Welcome home, Master Zagan.) Nephy was waiting for him in front of the throne room in her nightgown.

"Nephy, you were still awake?"

As Zagan stared at her in wonder, Nephy put her finger to her lips and went 'Shhh.'

Looking closely, he realized Nephy was sitting down with Foll sound asleep on her lap. It seemed the two of them were waiting for Zagan to come back.

(Didn't I say to go to sleep without waiting?) As Zagan said that, Nephy formed a wry smile.

(I'm only here because Foll insisted on waiting for you to return, Master Zagan.) The person in question seemed to have fallen asleep like a log partway through, though.

And seeing that, Zagan's face naturally slackened.

(She was originally an intruder who attacked me because she wanted the power of the Archdemon, though, huh?)

(And were you not the one who placed this child close at hand, Master Zagan?) While saying that, Nephy gently brushed Foll's head, which made the small child stir lightly as if it was ticklish.

Zagan then went up beside the two of them in a relaxed manner and sat down.

(Ah... Also, what did you have for dinner today?) Zagan felt like covering his face as he wondered why that was the first thing he asked upon coming back, but Nephy just quietly nodded.

(We had a simple meal of lamb soup and salad.)

(Oh, that soup, huh? How regrettable.)

(There are still some leftovers. Shall I warm some up for you?)

(Hmm... No, I'm fine for now. Foll is already asleep, after all.) After watching Foll's peaceful sleeping face, he realized he didn't feel like waking her up just to have some soup poured for him. And so, Zagan decided to warm it up and have some on his own later.

Nephy then covered her mouth as if his decision felt strange to her. The change in her expression was meager as always, but the way her ears quivered with a twitch showed that she was rather cheerful.

(After that, Foll also did her best. She carried all of the books we brought back into the archives.)

(There were quite a large number of them, right?)

(Yes. But because she wanted to quickly read them herself, she tried to have them ready for you to read right away upon your return, Master Zagan.)

Zagan tried imaging the figure of that small girl pattering about in and out of the archives for his sake. And as he did, a charmed sigh spilled from his mouth.

I wonder if... having a family feels something like this... It felt like he would forget that he was a villainous sorcerer if things kept going at that rate.

After that, Nephy pointed her azure eyes toward him.

(Master Zagan, could it be that something happened with Foll?)

(Huh? No, I don't think there was anything in particular?) Foll also wasn't good at expressing her emotions, but he didn't think he had caused her to get angry or sad.

As Zagan inclined his head to the side, Nephy affectionately gazed at Foll's sleeping face.

(Today, Foll seemed to be particularly happy. Master Zagan, you may not be self-conscious of this, but it is likely that you did something that brightened her day.)

Something that made Foll happy... Unable to think of what that was, Zagan tried to retread his earlier conversation with her. And as he kept his head tilted for a while, he remembered the moment where Foll made a strangely happy face.

(Oh, could it be that?)

(Do you have some sort of idea?)

(It wasn't really anything major, though. All I told her was that if we spent a thousand years together, then wouldn't we be able to sense what the other needs just by look at each other's faces?)

As Nephy blinked with her eyes wide open, she let out a stifled chuckle.

(If you say such a thing, then anybody would be in high spirits.)

(Why's that?) Zagan couldn't figure out the meaning behind Nephy's words as she leaned on his shoulder.

(I believe the reason Foll was so happy was because you said 'if we spent a thousand years together.' I mean, aren't dragons supposed to live far longer

than humans? Not only that, to say that you would understand each other...)

Having that said to him made the truth finally dawn on Zagan.

The mythical classed dragon was a race that was said to live over ten thousand years. With a human's original lifespan, it was likely impossible to pass time together. After all, they didn't live long enough to even last through a young dragon's childhood. As such, it was difficult to find an existence that they could live together with during their eternal time.

Perhaps, that's exactly why the grudge she bears for her parent dragon being killed is so deep.

It may have been a different story if it was a matured dragon who passed the age of childhood. However, to a young dragon who still needed their parents, the anguish they felt from having that stolen away should have been the same as humans, or perhaps even far greater.

I guess in the end, if I don't finish off Raphael sooner than later, it'll become something troublesome.

If Foll and that man were to meet, at worst, it was entirely possible that it would turn into an all-out war with the church. If that happened, it would be a huge step back in Zagan's goal of making it so that Nephy could live under the sun.

And while he racked his brain over what to do, Nephy muttered in a somewhat lonely manner.

(It would be nice... if I could also spend that much time together with you...)
And this time, it was Zagan who stared back at her in wonder.

(What are you saying? Isn't it obvious that you'll be with us, Nephy?) Elves were also a race with a long lifespan, even if it wasn't to the extent of the dragons. If one were to add on the power of sorcery, then it would likely be a trifle to live at least a thousand years.

In that sense, the one who had to put the most effort into living a long life was Zagan.

As Nephy's azure eyes trembled at his response, she returned a large nod.

(Yes! I will accompany you anywhere you go, Master Zagan.)

This time, Zagan was taken aback, and before he knew it, his face and Nephy's were close enough that their noses were almost touching.

Ugh... So Nephy's eyelashes were this long, huh? Or rather, she smells good!

Thinking about it, the fact that she was wearing her nightgown showed that she just got out of the bath, which meant Zagan was likely smelling the scent of soap. Upon realizing all that, he touched her hair, which was let down with his hand. It was still a little wet, cold, and soft.

Right around the same time, Nephy also grew conscious of the distance between them. She was now bright red from the tips of her pointy ears to the top of her cheeks.

(Nephy...) He called her name, and Nephy's eyes grew moist. As his gaze was sucked in by her pink lips, Zagan softly touched her cheek.

(Ah...) She let out that gasp like breath, which merely served to make Zagan's face grow hotter.

If it was now, then he felt like she would permit it. Yes, he was sure it was fine to touch her pure white skin, and progress onward after that.

And then, just as their lips were about to meet...

"Hey, Zagan! This is bad!" A magic circle shined in the middle of the room, and the voice of his undesirable friend who couldn't read the atmosphere rang out.

Trembling with a start, Zagan and Nephy distanced themselves from each other. And then, Barbatos' face suddenly appeared in the center of the magic circle.

"Hey, at least answer me. What are you... uh, huh?"

Zagan slowly got up and stood before Barbatos. And within his gaze, one would not be able to find even a speck of compassion.

"Come out to the surface, Barbatos. I'll turn you into minced meat."

"Why are you so pissed?"

Zagan was seriously intent on killing Barbatos, but seeing the 'other person' he was carrying within the magic circle made him stop his hand.

"Chastille?"

"Didn't you tell me to go take a look at her...?"

Yes, Barbatos was carrying the young girl who served as an Angelic Knight. Unlike when Zagan met her in the afternoon, however, she was wearing her Anointed Armor. And on her back was a Sacred Sword.

Unfortunately, her face was pale and her breathing was rough. He couldn't spot any external wounds, but she didn't look to be in good condition. In order to get a better grasp of the situation, Zagan touched Chastille neck and brow, then examined her.

Her pulse is high. And yet, her temperature is bizarrely low. From that condition, he immediately figured out the cause of the irregularity.

"Is it poison?"

"Probably. She was given something to drink and all."

Zagan immediately turned over to Nephy.

"Nephy, I'm going to treat her. Give me a hand."

"Y-Yes." Despite having yet to digest the entire situation, Nephy immediately nodded and softly set Foll down on the ground as she stood up.

And then, as one would expect, Foll woke up.

"...Zagan, you're noisy."

"Sorry about that. You can just go to sleep."

As Foll rubbed her eyes while mumbling, Zagan gave her an apathetic response. But then, she began sniffing the air.

"Huh...? This smell..." And what Foll shifted her focus over to... was the Sacred Sword on Chastille's back.

Ah, crap. By the time Zagan noticed how bad the situation was, Foll's golden eyes were lit up in rage.

"An Angelic Knight!" Foll's arm transformed into that of a dragon. Even if she was merely a young one, her claws could easily tear apart steel. They likely possessed enough destructive power to rival that of Zagan's fist when he wielded it with his power as a sorcerer.

"The hell? H-Hey, Zagan!"

By the time Barbatos raised his voice in a fluster, Foll was already slashing in with her claws.

"Stop that, Foll!" Zagan was somehow able to grab her arm and stop her assault. He managed to stop the fiendish claw right as it was on the boundary of touching Chastille's brow.

Foll was surely scowling.

"Why are you stopping me?"

"She's my guest. Don't go killing her on your own."

Hearing those words made Foll's eyes cloud over with disappointment.

"... I see." She was making a face like she'd been betrayed.

Zagan felt a pain in his chest from having made a young girl who was waiting for him at such a time make that kind of face.

Chastille's condition was a race against time. However, he couldn't just leave Foll alone as she was.

Zagan didn't give any thought to saving someone else as a sorcerer. But even so, Foll was one of the people that Zagan had to protect. And because of that, Zagan quietly questioned her.

"Do you... hate Angelic Knights?"

"...Zagan, you should have already noticed. I became a sorcerer in order to get revenge against Angelic Knights."

Foll had been watching Zagan for the same amount of time that he had been watching her.

I can't... just irresponsibly brush this off, huh? Resigning himself, Zagan nodded.

"So, is the target of your revenge this girl?"

"A Sacred Sword wielder killed my father."

"I see. Still, it couldn't have been her." Taking hold of Foll's hand, Zagan earnestly appealed to her.

"Hey, Foll. Getting revenge by killing anyone you can get your hands on is a mistake that amateurs often make. Even if you kill this one, it would be of no concern at all to the one you want revenge on. On the contrary, it would only increase the number of enemies you have. And those enemies will likely become further obstacles along your path of vengeance."

"Zagan, what do you even know about me?" Foll's voice trembled with anger and irritation as she asked that, and Zagan shook his head.

"That's why I'm saying you're an amateur. Real revenge... is different, okay?" Zagan said, then pointing a severe yet warm gaze over at her like an affectionate father, he continued, "Real revenge is to take your target, intently torment them, drag them down to the depths of fear and despair, and finally make them beg you to let them die, got it?"

Hearing that left not only Barbatos, but even Foll completely dumbfounded. However, Zagan simply continued in an indifferent manner.

"And then you kill them when you're satisfied, at which point your revenge has finally been enacted. Killing them in one breath won't make you feel refreshed at all. Such a simple revenge... won't ever save you."

Zagan's words were likely taken as being completely serious by her, as a line of sweat ran down Foll's cheek.

"Zagan, have you also... taken revenge before?"

"Yeah. Though, I killed them in one breath, so I didn't feel relieved at all...
That's why I'll teach you the correct way to do it."

Zagan was talking about the former owner of this castle, the sorcerer who tried to use him as a sacrifice. After being abducted, Zagan was tortured to increase his freshness as a sacrifice. At that time, he found an opening and took him out. However, what he was left with was not the relief of survival or the

sense of accomplishment from victory, but hollowness.

I should have tormented that guy to death...

As he was now, Zagan knew of a much more effective method. There were many torture devices at his disposal in this castle, after all. And he would use them to fully sate Foll's thirst for revenge.

Perhaps overwhelmed by his drive, Foll nodded repeatedly as she bobbed her head.

"G-Got it," she said, and then her dragon arm returned to its human shape.

"...Hey, are you really okay with teaching that to your adopted daughter?" Barbatos was making an astonished face as he questioned him, but Zagan had no time to pay that any mind.



"Huh...?" As Chastille opened her eyes, she saw an unfamiliar ceiling spread out before her. It looked old and made of stone. However, it was in no way dirty. In fact, she could tell that it had been carefully maintained. And additionally, she could tell it was night out due to the color through the window, so only dim candlelight unreliably illuminated the room.

Where am I...? As Chastille sat there, completely bewildered, she suddenly heard a quiet voice to her side.

"So you're awake."

"Za...gan...?"

She caught sight of a sorcerer with a villainous countenance who somehow also had a listless gaze. And in her mind, she was sure his gaze had grown far more gentle than when they last met.

Zagan lowered his sight to a thick book, shifting his focus away from Chastille.

"Give your thanks to Nephy. She was the one who provided treatment."

"Treatment..." Her head was still in a haze, so she wasn't able to think properly.



Did I... lose against someone...? If so, then why exactly was I fighting in the first place?

As Chastille let her eyes wander, she spotted a greatsword that was next to her bed. It was a Sacred Sword. Her Sacred Sword. There were no signs of it being dirtied with blood or chipped from crossing swords. And while she stared at it in wonder, halfway at a loss for words, Zagan spoke up as if he was unable to just watch her.

"It seems you ingested some poison. I don't know any more than that myself."

Hearing those words made Chastille recall lost memories.

That's right. I was summoned by a letter...

"The Unification Faction...?"

The man who called out Chastille named himself a member of that group. He lurked in the shadows, so she never quite managed to make out his figure. He claimed that was best for both their sakes. And so, she believed that he was an Angelic Knight just like her.

Regardless, she'd heard the voice of a man who didn't seem all too young. It was calm, and even somehow akin to that of a sage holding deep wisdom. It didn't sound at all like the voice of a person who picked up a sword in order to slay sorcerers.

In a way, it was similar to Clavwell's, but he also came off as far more openminded. And that man quietly spoke to her.

"Even after a thousand years, the battle with the sorcerers has not come to an end. The church should be a means of keeping sorcerers in check, not a group focused on slaying them. So I suppose you may think of us as a gathering of those who hold such beliefs."

That was the first time Chastille had heard of such a force within the church, and it greatly bewildered her.

After all, in her mind, those were the thoughts of a heretic. And as she voiced those beliefs, the man leisurely laughed.

"And how, pray tell, do your actions differ in that regard?"

As an Archangel, Chastille objected to the subjugation of an Archdemon. If that was not heresy, then what was?

Chastille couldn't say anything to refute the man's point, so he continued speaking.

"Do you have any interest in joining hands with us? You, who has so openly antagonized the church, require powerful allies. And we shall join that rank. By championing you, who wields a Sacred Sword, we too will be able to walk out under the light of the sun. Tell me, is that not a reasonable offer?"

As long as a man like Raphael existed, Chastille wouldn't see the light of the next day. And so, given the situation, this wasn't a situation where she had the luxury to worry about appearances.

Which means... he's a subordinate of His Eminence Clavwell? Clavwell had said he would rescue Chastille from her current situation, so there was a high probability that he was working with such a force.

But if I take their offer and live, what do I do with the rest of my life...?

She already couldn't see herself serving the church any longer. However, as an Angelic Knight, she no longer had any other path open to her. She had nowhere to return to.

Chastille was unable to answer right away, so the man solemnly assured her.

"It is fine if you do not answer immediately. However, I must warn you not to defer your decision for too long. Let's see... As proof of our sincerity, when you need help, you may call this name."

"Orobas."

The word he spoke felt heavy for some reason. In fact, simply recalling it made her body warm for whatever reason. And as she asked if that was the man's name, he only gave a vague answer.

"I suppose you can say that is both correct and incorrect. You may think of it as the name of our leader."

Leader... If it was the head of an entire force within the church, then it had to

be an Archangel, a high-ranking Angelic Knight, or a cardinal. However, Chastille had never heard the name Orobas within the Church.

Which means... It's most likely the name of the organization itself? In any case, she could sense that it was an important name to them.

"That name... will surely protect from any harm." And with those last words, the man's presence vanished.

Is it alright... to trust them...? He was a rather mysterious man. Sure, she wanted to believe him, but if it were a trap, not only Chastille, but even her subordinates were in danger.

After she returned to her room, mulling over the issue all the while, some tea was prepared for her.

Thinking back, she should have remained more vigilant after that meeting. However, since Chastille was deep in thought, she ended up drinking it without a moment's hesitation. And then, by the time she came to, she was being nursed in this place.

Chastille recited those details bit by bit.

That man's voice... I feel like I've heard it somewhere before... However, it wasn't clear. No, honestly, rather than not remembering it, she thought her conclusion impossible.

As for Zagan, she couldn't tell if he was listening or not, as he simply kept silent while flipping over the pages of his book.

A short time after Chastille's story ended, Zagan spoke in an uninterested tone.

"Tell me, do you have any idea who may have poisoned you?"

"Hm... I wonder?" Thinking about it normally, Raphael was the obvious conclusion. If Clavwell hadn't forced his way into their conversation, he may have even cut her down during their initial meeting. Right now, he was obviously the one who wanted her dead most.

However, she had also become an enemy of the church itself. So as it stood, there were innumerable suspects. Potential enemies were a dime a dozen.

Zagan shook his head as if he had read Chastille's mind as she mulled over all the possibilities.

"That man... Raphael, I think he said? It's probably not linked to him."

"Why? Or rather, do you know Lord Raphael?"

As Chastille questioned him, staring on in wonder, Zagan let out a sigh to display that he found the entire situation quite bothersome.

"He got in the way while I was enjoying some liquor, so I lost my cool to an extent."

That dreadful man seemed ready to even point his sword at Zagan as he baited him into giving up information on Chastille.

"He's cut down nearly 500 sorcerers. That kind of person would rather kill on the spot than orchestrate an assassination attempt. Instead of serving you poison, he would execute you brazenly with his sword. He seems to have obtained the pretext for that, too."

"Pretext...?"

Chastille didn't know what he was talking about, but Zagan didn't seem keen on sharing more. And while she was perplexed by that fact, Zagan closed his book and stood up.

"For the time being, it seems you're Nephy's friend, so I'll look after you until you regain your strength. The idiots who dare to pick a fight with me are all gone by now, so you should be fine."

"Wa...it..." As Zagan turned his back to her, Chastille suddenly grabbed his robe.

"...What do you want?" Zagan leaked out a displeased voice, but Chastille merely called out to him in a weak tone in response.

"Can you... stay by my side... for just a little while... maybe...?" Chastille's voice was impossibly soft for an Archangel.

Well, at this point, I don't even know who to act tough in front of.

Even though she should have known this day would eventually come,

Chastille felt completely and utterly helpless at actually having an attempt at her life made.

Zagan then let out an exasperated sigh.

"...Ask Nephy for that kind of thing." Those words were thrust her way. And his response was only obvious, of course. Sure, they'd only met a few times, but Chastille could tell he cherished Nephy from the bottom of his heart. Asking him to comfort her despite knowing all that was extremely unreasonable of her.

However, for some reason, Zagan sat back down on his chair.

"U-Um...?"

"There's no way we can wake Nephy up at such a late hour, right?"

"Um, so, then you'll... stay with me?"

"I'm just going to sit here and read." He refused to face her, but even so, Zagan didn't take his leave.

"...Sorry." Chastille found it pathetic.

What... did I just ask him to do...? Did she want him to turn to face her? Or perhaps, did she want to escape the church and stay by his side?

There's no way... I can force myself in between those two.

Both Zagan and Nephy were impossible to hate, so she wanted to witness their happy future together. And maybe, just maybe, she had a part to play in it as well. However, exactly what form that would take... was something she herself did not know.

For now, at the very least, having somebody by her side eased her worries, and before she knew it, Chastille fell into a deep slumber.



"So, why did it end up like this!?"

Early next morning, Chastille seemed dissatisfied with something as she raised her voice in anger.

She was in the castle's dining hall. After somehow expelling the poison from her system overnight, she managed to get up in the morning and ended up

taking breakfast together with the others.

However, the change of clothes Nephy had forced on her had earned her ire.

"I think it suits you very well." Nephy tried to console her in an unimpressive manner.

Chastille was wearing a similar one piece dress and apron to Nephy. Since it was a set of Nephy's spares, even if it was the usual maid uniform, it felt a little unflattering in comparison.

"Grrr... I'm the Maiden of the Sacred Sword, you know? Why do I have to mimic a mere servant!"

"Hey, watch your mouth. I won't forgive anyone who badmouths Nephy." His anger made perfect sense, as calling those the garments of a mere servant was the same as calling Nephy a mere servant. There was no way he could forgive such a thing, even if Chastille was Nephy's friend.

And as he informed her of such with a snap, Chastille finally crumbled to her knees with tears in her eyes.

"...Right now, my heart can't take much more, so can't you at least try to be kind to me?"

"Don't act spoiled."

There were cold eyes looking down on Chastille the entire time. Foll's eyes. She was staring at Chastille fixedly from behind Zagan, but the look was in no way amicable. She had stopped thinking about revenge, but that didn't mean she was ready to accept Chastille with open arms.

Unfortunately, Zagan didn't really feel like warning her of the situation. And clearly not cluing into Foll's true feelings, Chastille gently smiled at the child in front of her.

"Ah, you are... Zagan's adopted child...?"

"Don't talk to me so familiarly, pony head!"

"P-Pony head...?"

Foll quickly exited the room after screaming that at her. And being so

dreadfully rejected made Chastille pin down her chest and prostrated herself on the ground.

"Wh-What exactly did I do wrong...?"

"Sorry, Chastille. I'll speak to that child later."

"Hic... Nephy, you're so kind."

Nephy expressionlessly spoke comforting words to the pitiful looking girl, and Chastille lifted her head as if she was being healed by them. However, Zagan shook his head.

"No, let Foll off quietly with that. Even if she harasses you a little, it's not like she'll kill you."

"So what, you think it's all fine and dandy as long as she doesn't kill me?"

And in response to Chastille's astonishment, Zagan unexpectedly made a serious expression.

"It seems her father... was killed by a wielder of a Sacred Sword."

"..." And with that, Chastille was at a loss for words.

Zagan paused for a moment, then quietly continued.

"It's not like you're responsible for it or anything, but I can't tell a brat to make such a clear distinction. I'll shelter you here, but do understand her circumstances."

For the time being, making Chastille do some servant work was also partially out of consideration for Foll. She had withdrawn once already, but if Chastille was treated with the hospitality of a welcomed guest, then her anger would have surely risen yet again.

Perhaps feeling a sense of responsibility, Chastille cast her eyes down.

"...Then, wouldn't it be better... if I leave?"

Hers was a natural reaction, but Zagan shook his head.

"Didn't I tell you already? It'll be fine if you just leave Foll be. Despite appearances, she's of a very proud race. Her pride should keep her from acting out pointlessly."

...Or so he thought, at least.



A moment later...

"Agh...!" Chastille's scream resounded throughout the castle.

"...What is it now?"

Zagan called out to Chastille without a hint of compassion as he watched her fall flat on her face.

"Wh-While I was cleaning, a frog... suddenly landed on my head..."

Upon closer inspection, it was obvious there was still a small frog on top of her head. It seemed that while she was mopping the floor, a frog was thrown at her. And it was now the third one in such a short time.

Zagan reflexively burst into laughter when he caught sight of her foolish expression, which was accompanied by her teary eyes.

"D-Don't laaaugh! Isn't this different from what you said!?"

It appeared this was all Foll's doing.

"Ah, looks like this is a result of her trying to harass you without using any power, huh?"

"Didn't you say her pride would keep her from resorting to harassment?"

"She is just a child, so this much is understandable."

At the very least, it was far more wholesome than Zagan's childhood actions, and he didn't feel like blaming her for each and every little thing.

Chastille then glared back at him fixedly.

"...You're favoring her an awful lot here, huh? I doubt you'd lay your hands on a child, but it's unexpected for you to be so lenient."

"Am I being lenient?"

"You are!"

Chastille vigorously nodded as Zagan tilted his head to the side in confusion. And realizing his own mistake, Zagan averted his gaze as he scratched his head. "Back when I first met her, I didn't realize she was a child and ended up slugging her with all my strength. I guess I still feel guilty about that..."

"Slugged, you say... Hold on. If you did, then that means she was originally an enemy, right?"

"Well, yeah," Zagan replied like it was no big deal, which left Chastille in shock.

"Then why do you treat that child so much better than me!? We both started out as your enemies, did we not?"

"I didn't really harm you or anything, though. I'm not the type who takes pleasure in hitting a lady."

"L-Lady...?"

For whatever reason, Zagan's reply made Chastille's face turn a bright red.

"Erk, th-then in that case, slug me as well. I hate being hurt, but I'll put up with it just this once!"

"...The hell? Don't tell me you're into that..."

"Y-You're wrong! I just mean I also want to be properly..."

Just what was it that she properly wanted? Chastille had turned bright red and hesitated to speak further.

And while he gazed at that girl, Zagan earnestly pitied her. *This girl's private* life really is in shambles, huh...?

It could also be attributed to Foll's pranks, but she was now opening her mouth, biting down, stammering, and on the verge of tears.

Zagan couldn't really criticize her inability to form words, given the situation. Moreover, since a bucket was knocked over near Chastille, there was dirty water all over. And because such things were happening repeatedly, the place was now dirtier than before she came by to start cleaning.

Back when she faced off against Zagan as an Angelic Knight, she had far more dignity. However, at the same time, her shambled state was also relieving.

If it's like this, then Foll probably won't think of seriously killing her.

Right about this time, having repeatedly pulled such pranks, Zagan suspected that Foll may have begun to harbor doubts about her hatred. In fact, she seemed to even be warming up to a wielder of a Sacred Sword.

By some stroke of luck, it seemed Foll had come across the one person who could make her give up on her quest for vengance. And while thinking that, Zagan let out a snort with a 'hmph.'

"I don't really get it, but have you gotten some of your pep back?"

"Eh, ah... Were you... worried about me?"

If he wasn't, then he wouldn't have gone out of his way to make Barbatos monitor her. However, Zagan didn't have the personality to just honestly say that aloud, and he felt there was no need to either, so he simply shrugged his shoulders.

"Who knows?" Zagan said, glossing over her question. Then, he sharply glared at her and continued, "More importantly, think about how you're going to deal with the one who poisoned you. You've at least got an idea, right?"

"Er, that's..." Chastille's face stiffened up instantly. And as if her right hand was searching for something, she repeatedly clenched and unclenched it.

That gesture made Zagan point his gaze over to Chastille's back. *She's not carrying her Sacred Sword, huh?*

Zagan didn't plan to harm her in any way, but to an Angelic Knight like Chastille, this was hostile territory. She even had open hostility pointed to her by Foll, so it was a poor plan to part with her best means of protecting herself. The fact that she set aside her Sacred Sword regardless was an ill omen...

Contrary to expectations, her frustration may be quite deeply rooted, huh?

A wielder of a Sacred Sword parted with their Sacred Sword. That was only possible if they no longer had the will to wield it. After all, even if one were to seize a Sacred Sword, there was no way they could cut down sorcerers or Angelic Knights with half-baked ideals.

Zagan shifted his attention over to the end of the corridor. And over there, Foll was peeking at the state of things with a fixed stare.

I guess I'll tell her to hold back just a little, huh? He didn't plan on letting Chastille stay forever, but having said that, he wasn't going to just throw her out in her current state. If she required more time to get back on her feet, he intended to at least wait.

And afterward, Foll's pranks, which had lightened in severity, only increased in frequency. Before they knew it, Chastille's scream resounding through the castle became a daily occurrence.

In its own way, this may actually prove they're getting along.

Setting aside the means, it looked like some form of communication between Foll and Chastille was born. And as that continued for several days, on a certain evening...

"Master Zagan, this is serious. Foll has gone missing!" Nephy's desperate cries resounded throughout the castle, wiping out any sense of ease within its inhabitants.

Chapter IV: Beating Down an Evil Monster Is the Job of an Angelic Knight

"...Zagan is kind, but there's no point if I don't get revenge with my own two hands."

After slipping out of the castle in the dead of the night, Foll traveled to Archdemon Palace.

Although she withdrew for a moment, in the end, she realized she couldn't settle down if she didn't kill the wielder of a Sacred Sword. *But Zagan and Nephy... will never allow it.*

It was difficult to understand how a sorcerer and an Angelic Knight could be friends, but it seemed to be true. And if she killed that friend, they would not forgive her.

"It's... comfortable there." She wanted to stay with them forever. She wanted to depend on Zagan, who said they would be together for a thousand years. And, as expected, that was the biggest reason why Foll had not taken action immediately.

In the end, Foll was likely far too young to carry through her revenge. After all, she felt solitude just as heavily as hatred. And Zagan and Nephy mercilessly buried that feeling away by consoling her. At that rate, Foll knew that if she nestled up against them until she became a mature dragon, she would end up forgetting her revenge.

Then there was Chastille, who should have been a target, but... she was a remarkably strange girl. Since Zagan had told Foll not to kill Chastille, she decided to prank her instead. Of course, Zagan and Nephy seemed angry, but she had no intention of stopping when they weren't even confronting her about it. If, by some chance, Chastille was angered and pointed her Sacred Sword at Foll, then she would have a reason to kill her.

Or so she thought, but Chastille never once pointed her weapon at Foll. On

the contrary, she didn't even carry around her Sacred Sword despite the fact that she was in hostile territory. And yet, just when Foll began to think she had a strong heart, she caught Chastille glaring at her on the verge of tears. Unfortunately, one look at the girl made Foll lose all strength in her shoulders.

Was it not just ludicrous to want to kill such a girl? Perhaps Zagan had anticipated Foll would end up feeling that way, which was why he didn't say a thing about it. After all, that sole thought had left her in a state of shock.

"Angelic Knights betrayed Wise Dragon Orobas. I must never... forget that."

Wise Dragon Orobas... That was the name of Foll's father. He was a great dragon who lived for a thousand years. His wisdom was profound, and he was sometimes strict, but also incredibly kind. Through his intelligence, he guided not only Foll but even humanity. Foll was proud to call such a distinguished creature her father.

On a certain day, a group of humans who called themselves Angelic Knights stopped by. She didn't know what they talked about, but her father flew off with the Angelic Knights on his back... and never returned.

By the time the seventh day passed, Foll could no longer wait and took to the skies to search for him. And what she saw was her father... who'd been pierced by a Sacred Sword, and the figure of a man sipping at his blood like a devil. It was no surprise, since a Sacred Sword could easily score a mortal blow even against the Wise Dragon Orobas.

Those Angelic Knights had betrayed her father, who had lent them his power and wisdom many times over. And she would never dare forget that fact. The burning, fiery hatred within her could never be extinguished. And yet, life with Zagan was far too comfortable... It had even almost made her take a liking to her enemy, Chastille.

Is my revenge... so trivial? There was no way it should have been. Sure, she knew there was no way to kill all twelve wielders of the Sacred Swords with her immature powers. But even so, her conscience shouldn't have allowed her to overlook an enemy that was standing right in front of her.

And so, Foll had traveled to Archdemon Palace to dispel all her doubts. *This place must contain something with enough power to kill an Archangel.*

She was certain that the Archdemon's legacy would allow her to go toe to toe with her sworn enemies, so even if it meant betraying Zagan and Nephy, she couldn't stop. However, just as she opened the doors to Archdemon Palace...

"Wow, to think there's a castle all the way down here."

Upon hearing that voice, Foll turned around with a shudder. And when she did, she caught sight of a man stepping out of the darkness.

Someone followed me? Because she was in such a rush, she neglected to be vigilant of her surroundings. Still, she didn't fail to see the greatsword on the figure's back, and her eyes shot open as soon as she did.

"A Sacred Sword...!"

She could feel the mana on her skin before she even had the chance to verify the inscription. How could she not? After all, it was the 'smell' of the Sacred Sword that cut down her father. She didn't think there would be another one in town besides Zagan and Nephy's friend.

Then, as if amusing himself, a smile crept up on the large man's boorish face.

"You may be a child, but you're still a sorcerer, I suppose. It's rather impressive that you saw through me before I even unsheathed my blade."

And then, Foll finally saw his face.

"You're..." It was without a doubt the face of the human who drank Orobas' blood.

"Hmm, who the hell are you? I don't recall getting to know any dumb brats like you."

In that instance, Foll felt something snap inside her head.

"YOU BASTAAAAARD!" Foll roared, then instantly transformed both of her hands into those of a dragon, green wings piercing out of her back.

She never even thought of using sorcery. Her mind was consumed by rage, so she simply slashed at him with her claws.

However, the Archangel drew his sword far faster than even Foll's full power could muster.

"Ah..." And in response, a befuddled voice leaked out of her.

This is... the power of a Sacred Sword... Aside from an Archdemon like Zagan, no one could just recklessly face such a threat. Foll had become a sorcerer precisely because she knew that all too well, but she had still made a fatal mistake in the end...

The engraved blade came swinging down at Foll's neck. And her final thoughts at that moment were of the faces Zagan and Nephy made as they gently brushed her head.

"Zagan..." she whispered desperately as she shut her eyes, accepting her imminent doom... However, the pain that she feared did not arrive no matter how long she waited.

In its stead was the sensation of an arm embracing her gently from behind. And then, an arrogant voice resounded throughout the room.

"I suppose I did tell you to act as you please, but I think I should at least set a curfew."

"...Huh?"

Miraculously, Zagan's arm stopped the Sacred Sword dead in its tracks.



"Well now... So you blocked my blow, Archdemon."

Zagan had caught Raphael's Sacred Sword with his bare hand... That being said, there was a magic circle acting as a shield between his skin and the blade.

It was a greatsword with a pure white blade. And on its surface were crests which differed from those used in sorcery, but were also somehow subtly different from Chastille's. It seemed the engravings on the Sacred Swords differed from blade to blade.

So that means... it's the weapon's inscribed name? Zagan inspected his arm as he held the object of his fascination at bay.

The skin on the hand that was gripping the blade was torn, but it wasn't burning like the last time. And that was despite Raphael's sword skills being far sharper than what Chastille had displayed.

It seems even a Sacred Sword can't overwhelm the Sigil of the Archdemon, huh? If this was ordinary old Zagan, he would've lost his right arm already. However, thanks to the mana of an Archdemon, there was no sign the Sacred Sword would be able to cut through it.

Relying on a tool doesn't feel all very good, though. On that point, since his opponent was also using a powerful tool, it was probably fine to just think that they were even.

Getting back to the matter at hand, Raphael seemed unable to move due to Zagan's hold on his Sacred Sword. And as the two of them stood there, Foll's trembling voice leaked out from within Zagan's arms.

"Zagan, why...?"

"I just happened across a convenient courier. And I figured you were here, so I had him teleport me over."

Zagan's feet were still submerged within a dark shadow, but it was clear to everyone present that it wasn't a result of his sorcery.

"I'm no courier, dammit!" Barbatos barked out, his voice thick with anger. And after he suddenly appeared from the shadow, he took up a position as far away from Raphael as possible. It looked as if he wanted nothing to do with their fight.

"I told you you'd be handsomely rewarded, didn't I? Don't complain."

Zagan had ordered him to monitor Chastille. And thankfully, sorcerers always remained faithful to their contracts. Even after he freed Chastille, this man kept following that order, which was why he got an immediate response as he called out to him upon learning of Foll's disappearance.

"Master Zagan, is Foll safe?"

It appeared that the shadow was still connected to the castle, so Zagan, of course, replied to Nephy's question in a gentle tone.

"Foll is safe. We'll head right back after I clean up the place. Just wait at the castle, Nephy."

"Understood." In truth, Nephy definitely wanted to charge over to Foll's side

as well. But even so, she decided to keep her feelings in check as she could tell things were about to get messy.

"...Well, anyway, let's head back. Children shouldn't be walking around this late at night. We're going home," Zagan said in his usual arrogant tone. However, Foll shook her head.

"No, that makes no sense... I... betrayed you... And yet, why...?"

What, is that all? Zagan gently brushed Foll's head as tears began to well up in her eyes.

"I told you to do what you want, right? Don't sweat the small stuff."

Upon hearing that answer, Foll buried her face in Zagan's chest. The dragon wings then vanished from her back, and her arms and legs returned to those of a human.

"So...rry..."

"Sheesh... What did I just say, Foll?" It didn't seem like he was getting through to her, since she kept worrying over the smallest things.

Thank goodness... I made it...

If he had arrived even a single second later, Zagan would have lost her. And compared to that, Foll sneaking into Archdemon Palace all on her own was truly worthless.

Eventually, after staying like that for a while, Zagan stared at Raphael.

"I already warned you, didn't I? I told you that if you try to do as you please in my domain, I'll crush and grind you into the ground."

In response to that, the Angelic Knight with an evil countenance replied in a voice full of confusion.

"Now this is odd... Are you saying a sorcerer is covering for a stranger?"

"She's not a stranger. This girl... is my daughter." And Raphael had dared to draw his sword on her.

I have no reason to let this man live, do I?

He wasn't standing before Nephy at the moment. Plus, there was also the fact

that he was the reason for Foll's grudge, so Zagan decided to torment him as much as he could before killing him.

Raphael then narrowed his eyes as if resigning himself.

"I see... A daughter, huh? This is rather understandable, then."

"That's how it is... Foll, back off a little."

After pushing Foll away, Zagan let go of the weapon in his grasp, and Raphael took his distance without stumbling, correcting his stance with his Sacred Sword at the ready.

The whole situation made Zagan knit his brows. *I mean, we're this late into it and there's no bloodlust?* It wasn't like Raphael had no fighting spirit, but Zagan couldn't sense any bloodlust from his sword. And yet, he was surely planning on fighting Zagan with it.

"...Since it's come to this, allow me to warn you. If you don't resist me with all your might, I will slaughter you."

"Though I am reluctant, you've left me no other choice. I cannot afford to die in this place," Raphael muttered, then finally unleashed his bloodlust.

"Heed my call... Sacred Sword Metatron," Raphael announced that name, which made a pallid flame burst out of his Sacred Sword.

"..." Zagan felt like letting out a groan, but just narrowly endured it. At that moment, it finally dawned on him that he had been toyed with back at the bar.

Brandishing his dazzling, shining Sacred Sword, Raphael began to speak.

"This is the power that has vanquished former Archdemons, reducing all evil to ashes. Come now, face my Flames of Purification. Face the power that only true masters of the Sacred Sword can manipulate." That was likely why a Sacred Sword chose its own wielder, as wielding such awesome power could not come easy.

So this is... the true power of the Sacred Sword...!?

Waves of heat rolled off the Flames of Purification. And the mere touch of them dismantled Zagan's magic circle. Even as he tried to weave together new sorcery, they were destroyed as soon as he finished constructing the circuit. At that point, any average sorcerers would have been reduced to a powerless state already.

"The hell... What's with this guy?"

The destructive power of the Sacred Sword was one thing, but Raphael's bloodlust had a fierceness to it like that of a beast of prey taking chase. Even Barbatos had felt overwhelmed and drew back in fear.

Despite all that, however, Foll's trembling voice leaked out from behind Zagan.

"Zagan, why...?" She was likely questioning why Zagan bothered to provoke Raphael. After all, if he had been making light of him, it would have been easier to gain the upper hand.

Zagan then responded to her in a gentle voice.

"I said I would teach you the proper way to enact revenge, right? Trampling your enemy underfoot while they put all their power into resisting you is one way. It will humiliate them and drag them down into the depths of despair."

Raphael was emanating a near inhuman bloodlust, but there was no doubt in Zagan's mind that he was an enemy he could defeat. *Besides, finishing off an Archangel will become the perfect foil.*

On the surface, those who opposed Zagan had vanished, but there were still those lying in wait for him to let his guard down. The defeat of an Archangel's would serve as the perfect final deterrent.

After mulling over such thoughts, Zagan kicked off the ground. The stone ground was smashed to pieces, and he closed in on Raphael instantly.

"Hnnngh."

"Too slow," Raphael said as he swung his sword downward, but Zagan dared to catch it with his right hand.

He was barehanded, but it wasn't a fist. No, within Zagan's palm, a magic circle made of condensed mana lit up. It appeared small, but in truth, all of the lights that appeared to form lines were circuits. In fact, the number he constructed easily surpassed 2000 in count. And Raphael's initial strike was also

blocked by this magic circle.

No matter how strong those Flames of Purification were, they could not possibly burn through 2000 circuits in an instant. *Shall I name it Heaven's Scale, then?*

Zagan did not put much faith in the power of an Archdemon. After all, he'd once had his sorcery cut apart by a Sacred Sword. And that was exactly why he'd developed a new technique to repel Sacred Swords.

However, despite it being complex in nature, it was not special in any way, shape, or form. Instead, it was simply solid.

It took in not only his enemy's sorcery, but even the mana surrounding it to continue enhancing itself. It was sorcery that was completely useless in the hands of anyone but Zagan. And that magic circle whose only merit was being solid... threw back the Sacred Sword, a clang reverberating through the air.

The impact was likely similar to striking a lump of rocks with a sword. Any ordinary person would surely have had the bones in their arms shatter from it. But even so, Raphael did not drop his Sacred Sword.

"Well, it's quite admirable for you not to let go of your sword after experiencing such pain."

"Ghhh..."



Unfortunately for Zagan, the Flames of Purification still continued to burn. And even as an anguished expression crept up on Raphael's face, he immediately adjusted his grip on the sword and came rushing in.

It was a straightforward downward slash with the Sacred Sword held overhead. However, dazzled by the shining flame, a pure white afterimage was burned into Zagan's eyes. His pure skill with the sword and the power to burn sorcery were nuisances on their own, but Zagan knew having his sense of sight impaired would prove fatal. And so, Zagan quickly pulled back his rear leg and swiveled his body. The tip of the white blade practically grazed his nose as it struck the ground. And with a rumble, the earth shook.

"Whoa—" Foll let out a small scream.

The Flames of Purification ran across the ground. It seemed Raphael's strike had carved a deep fissure into the stone floor. And with the size of Foll's body, it was large enough to completely engulf her. *This damn mindless brute strength of his...*

Enhanced by his Anointed Armor and Sacred Sword, Raphael's physical strength reached Zagan's, even though he was a sorcerer who specialized in combat.

It was clear that in a simple bout of physical ability, no Archdemon could ever hope to match Raphael, so it stood to reason that an average sorcerer would only get slaughtered. And even while witnessing that power in action right before his eyes, Zagan's expression remained composed.

"It'd be troublesome if you caused too much damage to this place," Zagan said, then sharply stepped in to drive his Heaven's Scale into Raphael's face from below. Unfortunately, Raphael quickly pulled back his Sacred Sword and caught the palm with it. And once the two forces clashed, a dull shockwave ran through him with a thud.

"How foolish, a strike with such a long stroke won't—" Raphael's sneering face contorted and he cut his words short. That only made sense, as his large body was sent flying despite his flawless defense. Somehow, Zagan's Heaven's Scale blew away Raphael along with his Sacred Sword.

"Oops, it's pretty hard to control how strong it is, huh...?"

The Sacred Sword was categorized as a greatsword, and it had a wide blade. In exchange for the large attack range it prided itself on, it couldn't be maneuvered well, so when closed in on its destructive potential was halved.

Actually, Zagan was only able to stop the initial attack because he combined the power of his Heaven's Scale with his ideal positioning. And yet, his strike had sent Raphael flying back to his ideal range.

Lowering his back, Zagan pushed forward as if digging the 'Heaven's Scale' into the ground. And once he closed in on his foe, he pushed up his palm toward him.

This time, however, Raphael was ready, and he swung down his Sacred Sword with both his hands.

Zagan's Heaven's Scale and Raphael's Sacred Sword collided, making sparks scatter with a clang. And after a moment, Heaven's Scale shattered and the Flames of Purification dispersed.

It seemed the Heaven's Scale and Flames of Purification were dead even.

"Impossible."

"I see. Three shots is the limit, huh?" Zagan muttered, seeming utterly unimpressed.

He exchanged three upfront blows with a Sacred Sword. It was magnificent power, but it still wasn't enough. If there were two, or even three opponents, then it would prove useless.

It was superb for the first performance experiment, but it was still far from complete. And as Zagan calmly verified the efficiency of his sorcery, Barbatos shouted at him.

"You dumbass! Now's not the time to be so easygoing, dammit!"

Raphael's stance was in shambles, but he still hadn't let go of his Sacred Sword.

And as he saw that, Zagan let out a small sigh.

"I told you before, didn't I? I have the leisure to do these things."

With his posture broken, Raphael's abdomen was wide open. And also, with the Flames of Purification gone, other sorcery could now be woven together.

Faster than Raphael could swing down his Sacred Sword, Zagan drove his left fist into Raphael's side. There were already several magic circles wrapped around that arm, and they were rotating. This was the very same sorcery that finished off Barbatos once before. Even without using something like Heaven's Scale, Zagan's fist could crush mere Anointed Armor without difficulty.

He could feel the sensation of bone's breaking with a snap. The shockwave from the strike surely even pierced through his entrails.

"GHAAA?" Raphael vomited out blood as he was blown away, and after crashing into Archdemon Palace's gate, he collapsed inside the entrance hall.

It was settled. Zagan had grasped victory... though he still curiously tilted his head to the side.

"How weak. Is this really the Angelic Knight who's killed nearly 500 sorcerers?"

Even the most dreadful Archangel was unable to inflict a single wound on Zagan. In other words, it proved that the church had no means to oppose an Archdemon.

Zagan then took a fleeting glimpse behind him at Foll. The young dragon was making a befuddled expression, but before long, she came to her senses and suddenly began clapping her hands.

What's this? It's not bad... Or rather, it somehow feels good, huh?

Zagan snuck in a wave back to her. And as she noticed that, Foll's eyes began sparkling.

All he had done was crush and grind an eyesore into the ground, and yet, Foll's straightforward envious gaze felt almost pleasant to him. Even though up until now, when the riffraff pointed such gazes at him, he never felt a thing.

And as Zagan's face slackened up all on its own from that, Barbatos groaned, sweat running down his brow.

"...You damn monster. You're not even short of fucking breath, are you?"

Well, that was surely the normal reaction. Certainly, Raphael's sword skills were sharp enough to overwhelm someone around Barbatos' level, but Angelic Knights were different from sorcerers. If they received even one fatal wound, then it was all over.

Back when Zagan beat down Barbatos, even after striking him in the same way, he was able to stand back up given the time, but the same did not hold true for Raphael. Or well, that *should have* been the case, at least...

"I... see. What terrifying... power." Even while spitting out blood, Raphael stood up with his Sacred Sword acting as a crutch.

Seriously, what's this guy? And in turn, Zagan readied himself and gathered mana in both his hands once more.



A little while earlier.

"I should go..." Foll had probably rushed out because of Chastille. And sure, Chastille knew she hadn't done anything wrong, but telling such a young child to forgive her was unreasonable. Zagan should have driven Chastille out.

Naturally, she was grateful that he was sheltering her, but she still felt there was no point if it ended up hurting Foll.

Zagan rushed over to Foll's room as soon as he heard Nephy's cries, and Chastille tried to follow him, but...

I've become too hesitant... to grip my Sacred Sword. That was why she had gotten a late start, and by the time she finally reached Foll's room, Zagan was no longer anywhere to be seen.

"Nephy, where's Zagan...?"

"Master Zagan... has gone off to bring Foll back." The snow-white elven girl tightly pursed her lips, gazing at the ominous shadow spread across the ground as she spoke.

The sight made Chastille recall the past. She remembered the incident where they were abducted by a sorcerer named Barbatos. At that time, they were

swallowed by a similar ominous shadow. And it seemed Zagan had reached Foll thanks to that very same sorcery.

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"Are you... not going?"
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"Master Zagan ordered me... to wait here." And that was the only reason she didn't pursue them.

"Then I will..." Chastille started speaking, but her feet came to a stop.

I'll go... and do what exactly? Even though the poison had already left her system, Chastille couldn't put strength into her arms and legs. And even though her Anointed Armor was left beside her bed, there was no time to go get it and put it on. Moreover, she was a target of the church despite being an Archangel.

Having said that, living under the protection of Zagan, who she had been hostile to in the past, was also out of the question.

But still... do I even have a reason to wield the Sacred Sword? She questioned herself, then sank to the floor with a thud when no answers came to mind.

"Are you alright? If you're not feeling well again, then..." Nephy immediately ran over and supported her body.

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"No, I'm... fine..."

"Are you certain...?"
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Honestly, nothing about Chastille looked fine in the least. And while Nephy was expressionless, the tips of her ears quivered as if she was worried about her.

Eventually, Chastille let out a small sigh.

"This may be the wrong time to say this, but I am a little... jealous of you."

As Chastille unintentionally let out a complaint, Nephy stared back at her in wonder. And seeing that change in her from her expression alone shocked Chastille.

Compared to when I first met her, she's far better at expressing her feelings. That was surely also thanks to Zagan.

Even to Chastille's eyes, which were not all that familiar with them, the

harmonious relation between those two was clear as day.

To love, and be loved... For such a relationship to be permitted... It makes me jealous.

There was likely something wrong with Chastille for thinking such a thing of an enemy. But even so, she wanted to be the person who healed that man's loneliness.

However, Nephy shook her head.

"Is that so? As for me, I am jealous of you, Chastille."

"...Haha. What about me could you possibly envy?" As Chastille deprecated herself, Nephy tightly gripped her skirt and continued.

"I mean, Chastille, are you not able to run over to Master Zagan's side?" Those were words filled with strong emotion, which was unusual for Nephy.

"The only thing I can do is wait for him here. Master Zagan is extremely strong, but he may be forced to go through painful things. And in the end, Foll might even leave without me being able to convey my feelings to her."

The anxiety of those who had to wait for their loved ones to return from the battlefield wasn't known to those who could join them. And Chastille was not among those who had to wait.

But what do you think I can accomplish by going...?

While Chastille remained unable to say anything, Nephy kept speaking.

"I cannot even go to his side to comfort or support him."

Even I'd like to do that sort of thing... And yet... For some reason, Chastille shook her head as if she was extremely frustrated.

"So what, are you saying I should go do that? I'm your enemy, you know? Wouldn't it be better if you just ignore Zagan's order and chase after him!?"

As Chastille raised her voice, something soft and white gently wrapped around her face.

"I cannot do that." It was Nephy. Chastille was now being embraced by Nephy. "After all, my duty is to greet Master Zagan with a 'welcome home' when he returns," while saying that, Nephy gently brushed Chastille's head.

"Besides, I must protect the castle while Master Zagan is absent."

She likely did not mean that in the sense of fighting. Those words meant that she would create a space where her master could relax upon his return.

And having her head stroked while being embraced, all strength left Chastille's body. She had let the complaints that she should have never spoken of rush out of her mouth. Even if she tried to endure it, having lost her way as she did now, it could no longer be helped.

"Even I... didn't want to point my sword at him..."

"I know," Nephy said, quietly nodding while brushing Chastille's head.

"But I'm an Angelic Knight and all..."

"I know," Nephy remarked once more, then simply nodded without denying or affirming her actions.

In that moment, Chastille found Nephy's chest to be comfortingly warm and clung to her.

"I'm forced to suffer through all this just because I was honest about not wanting to fight Zagan..."

"I know."

She'd had her Sacred Sword revoked for a while, was glared at by an Archangel stronger than her, and then was poisoned and on the verge of death. When Chastille thought of all that, tears came pouring out drop after drop, staining Nephy's pretty nightgown. And yet, Nephy didn't look displeased at all and continued to soothe her mind. The sight made Chastille unable to bear it any longer, so she lashed out.

"I didn't want to defeat him. I wanted to fight by his side!" Chastille's words were heresy considering her position as an Archangel. Any normal person would scorn her for having such selfish thoughts about a sorcerer. And yet, Nephy nodded as if to praise her.

"So you do understand after all."

As Chastille raised her face to look Nephy in the eyes, Nephy simply gazed back at her with her usual expression.



"Back when I first talked to you, you said that Master Zagan appeared lonely... It appears you really do understand him well, Chastille." Nephy was surely talking about when they met after she was driven out by Zagan. And though she spoke as if the meeting was nostalgic, her ears also quivered in frustration.

"In truth, I felt a tad envious. I mean, I thought that I was the only one... who could understand Master Zagan."

Chastille and Zagan's first meeting ended with him saving her, but Zagan never sought any compensation from her for the act. On the contrary, it wasn't even clear if Zagan remembered the incident.

Still, the profile of his lonely face remained burned into Chastille's mind. At that time, it almost seemed as if the one that needed to be saved was not her, but him. *And Nephy... saved Zagan.*

As Zagan was now, that shadow of loneliness was nowhere to be found. Unlike Chastille, who had noticed it but did nothing, Nephy returned to save Zagan even after being driven out of the castle.

As Chastille remained in a daze, reflecting on such thoughts, Nephy brushed aside her bangs and spoke once more.

"But... I also felt equally happy. I mean, why wouldn't I after finding out there was another person who understood Master Zagan."

Nephy's encouraging words somehow charmed Chastille. *You've... become strong, huh?*

She had finally reached the point where she could say such words to someone other than Zagan. And after pausing for a moment, Nephy struck Chastille's shoulders with a thud.

"Are you alright now?" Nephy inquired.

"Ah... Y-Yes..." Chastille responded. And though she was feeling better, the long embrace had turned her face red. Working up the courage, she timidly asked a question in turn.

"Could it be... that you were trying to comfort me?" There was no real need to confirm it. Still, she wasn't so sure of herself that she felt comfortable

assuming things.

And in response, Nephy tilted her head to the side with a puzzled expression on her face.

"Yes... Um, could it be that I didn't do a good job?"

"That's not what I mean. Just... why? Um, aren't I an enemy to all sorcerers?"

Over the past few days, they'd shared meals, cleaned together, and slept under the same roof, so even Chastille thought it was strange to bring that up all of a sudden.

Nevertheless, at the root, they should have been enemies. And in response to that, Nephy tilted her head to the side as if she found the question silly.

"I mean, aren't we friends?"

So this girl... also feels that way? That was the precise moment Chastille realized there was no winning against her. And at the same time, she decided she wanted to protect the things Nephy cherished.

After all that, Chastille wiped away her tears and stood up.

"Sorry. I've shown you something disgraceful," she said.

"It's fine," Nephy replied. And as she continued with a 'besides,' her lips loosened. It was still awkward, but that was most definitely a smile.

"Clearing away sources of Master Zagan's concerns is another one of my duties."

"By concerns, you mean me?"

"Yes. He has been quite worried about you since the incident with Lord Barbatos."

Chastille doubted her ears as she heard those words.

"He didn't even remember my face, you know?"

"There's no way that was true. Or at least, that was how it appeared to me." If Nephy was the one saying it, then it was likely true. And with that, Chastille resolved herself, cementing her decision in her mind.

"Thank you. I'm also... heading out now," Chastille said, realizing that she no longer had anything to lose at that point.

Then, at least this one last time, I'd like to do as I please.

That man may not have truly needed her, but Chastille wanted to lend him her aid regardless. That was why she took a step forth into the shadow. She wore no Anointed Armor, but she was carrying her Sacred Sword in hand.

"Yes. Take care, Chastille."

Chastille vanished into the shadow as those words echoed around her.



Back at Archdemon Palace, Raphael stood up, ignoring his smashed Anointed Armor and fatal wound.

Surprised, Zagan observed his state without letting his guard down. *It's... not sorcery, huh? Is this the power he obtained from slaying a dragon?* If it were sorcery, then Zagan could 'eat' it, but honestly, it was hard to imagine an Angelic Knight would stain their hands with it.

An Archangel who could stand back up after suffering a fatal wound truly was a nightmarish existence to sorcerers. Even an Archdemon candidate would have trouble defeating him. However, a delighted smile crept up on Zagan's face.

"Thank goodness, right, Foll? Seems he won't go down so easy. Put some thought into how to punish him."

"Er, um..." Foll gulped down as if recoiling at his words, but she immediately nodded, her eyes filled with a sharp wrath.

Raphael quietly gazed at Foll as she did that. It was probably just Zagan's imagination, but his eyes looked to be colored by compassion and grief as he stared at her. After staring at them for a while, he threw out a question in a severe voice that also somehow sounded like a sigh.

"It seems I am quite detested among you lot."

"You raised your hand against my daughter, so of course I'm angry. Plus, you yourself have killed nearly 500 sorcerers, right? Saying you don't like being resented is like saying they're no better than insects."

"Well, what's your damn reason?" Raphael said, then shifted his focus over Foll.

And gritting her teeth, Foll glared back at him and spat out some venomous words.

"The Wise Dragon, Orobas... That's the name of the dragon you murdered."

That was the first time Zagan heard Foll speak that name.

It's a name that's etched into history when it comes to sorcery and folklore, a legendary dragon. Using sorcerers as an example, he was on the same level as Marchosias.

Zagan never dreamed that Foll would be that dragon's daughter. However, he had some reservations about the idea. *Is a legendary dragon something that can be struck down by someone so weak?*

In all fairness, Raphael's power approached the very limits of human potential. Unfortunately for him, however, his strength paled in comparison to Zagan's. Under normal circumstances, it would have taken an army of a thousand average sorcerers or humans to strike him down.

Still, Raphael was able to stand back up after taking the full brunt of Zagan's blow, which was most likely due to the power he gained upon slaying Orobas. But in that case, how had he even managed to defeat the dragon in the first place? The power he showed Zagan was clearly nowhere near enough...

Upon hearing Orobas' name, Raphael's eyes shot wide open.

"...I see. Orobas' child, huh?" For whatever reason, his voice sounded tired as he said that. And pulling his Sacred Sword off the ground, he focused his strength into his hands.

"Then there's no way I don't kill you here!" Raphael exclaimed, brandishing his Sacred Sword and charging at Foll as he did.

"Do you think I'll allow that?" Zagan coldly stated, shooting his fist out at Raphael's face.

Any average sorcerer would have had their head caved in by that blow, but the large Angelic Knight merely bent backward and flew through the air. Still, there was definite feedback in that strike. Zagan could also tell that the bones in his jaw were smashed. And because the jaw had many nerves which connected to the teeth, a blow to that spot jolted the brain greatly.

Be it a sorcerer, an Angelic Knight, or a dragon, there was none who could stand up after that. I don't know what you're thinking, but I'll render you powerless for the time being.

Raphael crashed into the ground headfirst, losing consciousness immediately... Or at least, that was what was supposed to happen.

"Hnnngh!" Somehow, with agility that didn't befit a man with such a large frame, Raphael twisted around and landed on both feet. It seemed his tenacity surpassed any sense of pain.

"What the?"

And then, just like that, he slipped by Zagan's side and rushed past him. Since he'd been convinced he had delivered a fatal blow, Zagan was unable to react immediately, which left only a defenseless Foll in his path.

"Don't... underestimate me!" Foll screamed, charging powerful sorcery in her hand.

"Stop that, Foll!" Zagan called out to her in restraint, but Foll stood her ground and fired off sorcery toward Raphael instead.

I won't make it in time! And just as he thought that... a sharp clang rang out, and blade collided with blade.

Two white Sacred Swords collided, a shockwave akin to a pallid chime echoing into the surroundings. Like a ripple of water, the ring of light that accompanied it ran through the entire underground hollow as well as Archdemon Palace's interior and vanished.

Yes, another Sacred Sword intercepted his blow.

"...Will you not stop this already, Lord Raphael?" And the one who caught that sword, appearing out of nowhere, was Chastille.

"Ah, crap. I forgot to close the shadow," Barbatos muttered in a deadpan tone.

It seemed that while Zagan was fighting, Chastille had crossed over through the shadow and chased them all the way here. Luckily she'd arrived in the nick of time. Though there were tears in the corner of her eyes and the tip of her nose was red for some odd reason.

Unfortunately, as one would expect, she had no time to don her Anointed Armor. But still, she at least held her Sacred Sword in hand as she appeared in her ultramarine shirt and skirt.

Chastille had managed to stop the strike of an Archangel without the divine protection of Anointed Armor. An admirable feat, all things considered, but there was something that amazed him far more than that or her sudden arrival.

This girl... stopped both Raphael's Sacred Sword and Foll's sorcery at the same time.

Foll had fired out sorcery to intercept Raphael, but it had vanished before piercing her target. And it wasn't like that happened by accident, either. No, her sorcery had been dismantled. From that, it became clear that Chastille was far more focused than when she fought Zagan.

"What... are you planning?" Foll growled as she glared at Chastille.

And yet, Chastille replied in a subdued voice as she repelled Raphael's Sacred Sword.

"You've been pulling pranks on me nonstop, but I'll admit I'm the one at fault for disturbing your peaceful life. So tell me, can we not try to talk things over?" Chastille's words were clear and composed, as if her gloominess in the castle was a mere facade.

Seems like she's gathered her resolve. Zagan didn't sense even a hint of hesitation or fear in her. And, in order to ease the tension in the air, Zagan walked up to Foll's side and bopped her head.

"Well, you two should definitely try to talk things out... but wait a little for now."

"Why?" Chastille uttered that question in confusion, but Zagan turned his attention to Raphael instead.

"I'd really like to interrogate this guy right about now, but he probably can't talk with how his jaw is, huh?"

Zagan's blow had completely shattered Raphael's jaw. And though he started regenerating already, it was still not in a state where speaking was possible. Really, it was admirable that he could grip his sword and run around like that with such energy despite all the damage he'd suffered.

At that very moment, Raphael fell to his knees. It seemed he'd finally exhausted himself. Similarly, Chastille sank to the floor, clearly out of breath. It had probably taken everything she had to hold back his blow.

That damn Raphael... Why'd his bloodlust vanish right as he charged at Foll?

The timing was suspicious. Plus, just as he thought, the blow Zagan dealt him was actually fatal. That meant even if Chastille didn't force her way through, he didn't possess enough strength to kill Foll.

She may have looked like a child, but Foll was an Archdemon candidate, one of the strongest sorcerers in the world. That was why Zagan told her to stop, as he didn't want Raphael dead quite yet.

Zagan loomed over Raphael threateningly, then spoke up.

"I'm a villain. A sorcerer won't think twice about torturing an Angelic Knight. However, I'd feel bad beating on an opponent with no real will to fight. Come now, tell me exactly what you're trying to do here."

There was absolutely no way he felt any sense of compassion or mercy toward this man, and Zagan had no intention of getting all buddy-buddy with Raphael, either. It was just that the whole situation didn't sit well with him. It unnerved him that Raphael was fighting with a death wish.

"Killing someone who seems to be asking for it isn't my style. Frankly, I find the thought repulsive."

Those words made Foll's eyes shoot open in shock.

"What... do you mean?"

"I'm not too sure. That's why I'm trying to talk to him," Zagan responded, though it wasn't like he didn't have a guess.

When he heard the name Orobas, his bloodlust vanished. It was the name of the dragon Raphael was said to have killed. If he lost his fighting spirit upon learning that Foll was that dragon's daughter, then an obvious reason for his actions sprung to mind.

'Atonement.' Zagan didn't think an Angelic Knight would ever feel indebted to a dragon or a sorcerer. And yet, that simple explanation made all the pieces fit into place.

And while Zagan was looking down on Raphael, Chastille pulled at the hem of his robe.

"H-Hold on, Zagan."

"...Things will only grow more complicated if you get involved. Just stay quiet for a bit."

"No, listen," Chastille rebuked Zagan, then turned her gazed to Raphael and continued, "I find this hard to believe, but I'm right, aren't I?"

"What are you talking about?" Zagan asked, clearly exasperated, as Chastille resumed her questioning in a clear tone.

"You are... the hooded man who visited me in the church... Orobas, correct?" "What...?" Zagan and Foll exclaimed.

Their shock came as no surprise, as Orobas was the name of Foll's father... It was the name of the dragon Raphael had killed, so hearing it made both Zagan and Foll doubt their ears. The only one among them who couldn't follow the conversation was Barbatos, and he looked completely flabbergasted.

"Hey, what do you mean by that?"

Right as Zagan said that and stepped closer to Chastille... 'something' broke with a crack.



Correcting the grip on her Sacred Sword, Chastille let out a trembling voice.

"Zagan..."

"I know."

The sound rang out from Archdemon Palace. And from deep beyond the smashed gate, they could sense something had begun moving.

Is something... there...? It was 'something' that wasn't there the other day when Zagan and the others investigated the place.

At that exact moment, an eerie atmosphere filled the room. It was a strange wind that seemed to coil and creep around one's skin, making it difficult to breathe. Even though there was no odor, Zagan's stomach felt like it was contracting, which made him nauseous.

A harmful aura... seemed like an apt description for it.

The cursed wind tore away at the flesh like it was a matter of course, but most remarkable was its ability to gnaw on the soul.

"Ugh... Guh..." Chastille pinned down her chest in pain. In addition to her recent poisoning, she was now without her Anointed Armor, which left her the most defenseless out of everyone present. And so, since there were no other options, Zagan stood in front of Chastille to cover for her.

Barbatos then let out a flustered voice.

"H-Hey... What happened?"

"Hell if I know," Zagan replied. Eventually, that 'something' showed its figure from the other side of Archdemon Palace's gate. And it... resembled a human.

From the top, it had a cranium, two arms, and two legs. However, it absolutely was not a human. Its skin was made of something as stiff as stone, and it throbbed in an eerie manner with every single breath. Black fissure-like tendons ran along its body, and Zagan could somehow tell these were its veins.

Despite all that, what differed above all else... was its face. Its mouth, which was filled with tightly packed little fangs, was on its forehead, and its bloodshot

glaring eyes were in the center of its face and around the left ear. It had no nose, but in its stead were barnacle-like cylinders sticking out here and there that sucked in and spat out air. No, not air... mana.

Zagan could tell just by looking at Chastille's reaction as she gripped her chest. Be it human, creature, or nature, it coveted the mana of all who possessed it, devouring it incessantly.

However, Zagan knew of this air. In fact, he even recalled the very figure before them.

"This is... a demon?" Zagan muttered, then immediately realized he was wrong.

I don't feel as much fear toward it as the demon from back then.

He was, of course, recalling the incident where Barbatos summoned a demon. The monster before his eyes clearly resembled it, but the demon he'd met before was a more heterogeneous creature.

Before long, Foll spoke as if groaning out.

"Wrong. This is... Archdemon Palace's... gatekeeper."

It was a sculpture modeled after a demon sealed by some sort of magic circle.

"...I see. So it's the aftermath of the collision between the Sacred Swords just now, huh?"

Either the seal was broken, or perhaps it was coincidentally activated. *No, it was probably the seal.*

Marchosias was not so senile that this could be mere coincidence.

"So it's a type of golem...?" Even if it imitated a demon, its origin was completely different. At the very least, it was not an absolute existence that Zagan feared he couldn't defeat.

Having said that, it was Marchosias' legacy. That surely meant it wasn't a poorly made puppet like its appearance suggested.

To Zagan, this was an exceedingly unknown existence.

"Im...possible..."

The one to let a hoarse voice... was Raphael. It appeared he'd recovered enough to at least talk.

I'd like to hear this guy's story right about now...

Unfortunately, it didn't seem likely that the monster before his eyes would just listen to what Zagan had to say. Nothing could be done about having to eliminate it first.

"Now then, what's to be done here?"

And just as Zagan muttered to himself... The eyeball at the monster's side wriggled and glared at him.

Bloodlust! Sensing that, Zagan's consciousness was drawn over to the Sigil of the Archdemon on his hand. If this monster was an existence which conformed to the rules of a demon, then just like before, it may have been possible to send it away with a wave of his hand. And so, Zagan held out his right hand and yelled out.

"By this Sigil of the Archdemon, Zagan commands you. Oh grotesque being, return to your slumber."

Answering his call, the Sigil of the Archdemon fired out an eerie light.

The demon Zagan had met before bent a knee and vanished upon being commanded in that manner. So, speaking to the one in front of him in the same way resulted in...

"Shit, it's no good. It's coming!" Zagan sharply clicked his tongue.

The mouth on the monster's forehead opened wide, and a destructive mana began to converge there.

An attack was coming. And as Zagan sensed that, he worried about what was behind him, and the first thing to catch his eye was Chastille who was... still standing in place.

This girl... She must know that she doesn't stand a chance without her Anointed Armor... Doesn't she fear death? Zagan reflexively grabbed the nape of Chastille's neck and jumped as he thought that. And that was why he overlooked the simple truth... He completely missed the fact that Chastille was

covering for the young girl right behind her.

"Get out of the way, Foll!"

"Eh..." Foll stood stock-still as if completely puzzled. And the light from the monster's mouth shot right toward her.

The light pierced through where Zagan was just standing and mowed down Foll's figure. And right before that, Zagan thought he saw something hanging over Foll.

As the torrent of light settled down, the ground fused into a glassy surface. And within that hideously burned earth, a gaping section of stone surface remained safe. Most curiously, the shadows of two people also remained within it.

"U-Ugh..."

The one letting out a small groan was Foll, and the one hanging over her... was Raphael.

Everything from Raphael's left shoulder down was missing. The sight made Zagan seethe. Was that anger because he was unable to protect Foll? Or perhaps it was because his enemy, of all people, had been the one to save her?

In either case, it was enough of a reason for Zagan to swing his fist at it as the monster opened its mouth once more.

"...You good for nothing doll. Don't get carried away, you hear?" By the time he spat that out, Zagan already jumped high above the monster.

"I'll grind you to dust... Heaven's Scale!"

In the blink of an eye, 2000 circuits combined in Zagan's palm, and he spun together his firm shield in a violent manner.

Crushing that magic circle in his hand, Zagan then swung his fist straight down, and Heaven's Scale pulverized the monster's cranium, along with its mana gathering mouth to boot.

Even under normal circumstances, Zagan's brute strength could shatter rock, and now he added the strength of Heaven's Scale to his fist. As such, the destruction didn't stop at its head. It continued along the torso and split the

monster right in half. The pieces which split off to the left and right were now nothing but stone, which slowly sank to their knees and fell over.

Soon after ascertaining its fate, Zagan ran over to Foll and Raphael who had taken on the brunt of the light.

"Hey, are you two alive?" As Zagan called out to them, Foll dimly opened her eyes.

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"I'm... okay..."
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Zagan didn't understand what he was planning, but Raphael had used his body and Sacred Sword as a shield in order to protect Foll. The little girl didn't have a single wound on her.

However, that didn't apply to Raphael at all. And looking at his figure, which had his arm blown off along with his entire shoulder, made Foll let out a bewildered expression.

"You bastard, what are you planning?"

With his consciousness still seemingly intact, Raphael opened his eyes and spoke.

"...I only did my damn job. It has nothing to do with you."

His wounds were far too deep and had probably paralyzed his sense of pain. The anguish in Raphael's voice was faint.

However, it's too close to his heart.

Zagan didn't understand the theory behind Raphael's healing ability, but the wound which blew away his left shoulder even reached his heart. The hemorrhaging was surely already a lethal amount. Even with the power of a dragon, Zagan didn't think he could be saved. Or so he thought...

"Guh... Hngh...!" Raphael grunted, then stood back up.

He had sustained a fatal wound, discharged a large quantity of dripping blood that dyed his silver Anointed Armor red, and even had a deathly complexion on his face, yet he still stood tall.

Why was it that he had to stand up?

Even while vomiting out blood, Raphael opened his mouth to speak without losing his composure.

"You said... that I am Orobas' damned foe, didn't you?"

"...Th-That's right." Foll was terrified by the tenacity of the dreadful man, but she still managed to nod as she spat out those words. And in response, Raphael gazed straight at the young girl and told her the truth.

"That is a mistake. That great dragon... was nowhere near weak enough to fall to the likes of me."

Zagan also held doubts regarding that matter. The Sacred Sword is certainly a nuisance, but is it really something that can defeat a legendary dragon? To be honest, he wasn't even sure if all thirteen Archdemons together were powerful enough to do that.

Raphael certainly may have possessed power far outside the norm even for Angelic Knight, but if he was overwhelmed by Zagan, then he couldn't have possibly killed Orobas. And, as if unable to accept that reality, Foll howled at him.

"That's a lie! I saw it. I saw you greedily devouring father's husk! You're the bastard who struck Father down with a sneak attack."

"Then let me ask you... was the Orobas you know of... such a weak dragon that he would taste defeat at the hands of a few humans?"

"...At this last moment, do you still show contempt for Father!?"

"I'm saying that the bastard making a mockery of Orobas... is you..." Raphael said, his words bewildering Foll. However, he continued, "I do not give a damn what you think of me. However, I will say this for the sake of Orobas' honor. That great dragon... in no way fell behind the lowly likes of we humans."

"What... do you?"

At that, Raphael let out a quiet breath.

"That day, for the sake of butchering a certain enemy, I pleaded for the assistance of Wise Dragon Orobas. And he listened attentively to my wish."

"Enemy...?"

Just what was this enemy the Angelic Knights were so desperate to strike down? *An Archdemon...? There's no way, huh?* Zagan gulped and waited for Raphael's next words with bated breath.

And before long, Raphael slowly turned his head. His eyes, however, were not looking at Foll, nor were they pointed at Zagan and Chastille. Instead, they were pointed further over at the stone Zagan had crushed.

"A demon... Within folklore, it is an existence referred to by that name."

Foll opened her eyes wide at his words.

"Don't speak such nonsense. I've never heard of such things existing."

"Then, what is that? Is it not a monster that differs from things we have knowledge of?"

"Ugh... That's..." Foll was unable to answer.

"I understand that you may not wish to accept it. After all, I also once believed that such things had left this world. However, in reality, a demon appeared in the present world, bringing about the deaths of many Angelic Knights and the great dragon," Raphael said, practically spitting out blood in the process, and then uttered, "And in the not too distant future, they will return."

Hearing those unbelievable words, Foll looked over to Zagan as if to cling on to him. And Zagan returned a straightforward nod.

"It's the truth. I don't know about them returning to this world or whatever, but demons truly do exist, even now. That's why I'm investigating folklore to try and discover a means of killing them."

It wasn't like Zagan sensed the tense situation that Raphael was talking about, but when the time came that he was forced to fight against such things, he needed a means to defy them.

Perhaps the fact that Barbatos was able to even summon a demon is an omen... Barbatos was certainly a sorcerer who possessed uncommon power, but the ritual at that time activated without even needing a sacrifice right as Zagan's power struck it, so it was incomplete.

A demon should not have been weak enough to be summoned by such half-

hearted sorcery.

Even Foll likely knew that Zagan's words were the truth. They had been gathering nothing but books related to demons in the castle's archives, after all. However, she still looked up at Raphael like she still couldn't believe it.

"Then, are you saying father challenged a demon and was defeated?" In response to that question, Raphael simply shook his head.

"He wasn't defeated. He merely traded his life for the enemy's."

That was simply rephrasing what she said. What differed, though, was that the dragon fought proudly in Raphael's mind, so those facts were passed along in his explanation.

That surely affected Foll greatly, as she tightly bit down on her lips and muttered something.

"...Then, just who... should I hate?"

"You should not hate, but be proud."

Foll knit her brows.

"Proud... you say?"

"That's right. Be proud. Orobas staked his life to protect you and the damned world you live in. If you do not boast of it, then who in the hell will?" Raphael exclaimed, then knelt down before Foll as he continues, "If killing me will make you regain your faith in Orobas, then do as you wish. I shall give this damned head to you."

Having sustained fatal wounds, Raphael looked down at his own body which continued to regenerate itself.

"The demons are mighty. If they are resurrected in this world where the church and the sorcerers quarrel, we have no way to prevail. We must prepare ourselves. That was why I despicably sipped on Orobas' blood and walked through that land of certain death."

That was surely the scene that Foll witnessed. And after saying all that, Raphael shifted his focus over to Chastille.

"However, my role has come to an end already. The seeds in the church are already budding. If my last duty is to be a parting gift to Orobas, then I can ask for nothing more."

Finally seeing where his story was going, Zagan opened his mouth to speak.

"Then, the envoy of the Unification Faction or whatever that Chastille mentioned really was you?"

Raphael quietly nodded.

"Indeed. While holding the status of an Archdemon and an Archangel, you bastards formed a connection, which is something exceedingly close to what I've been trying to do... That's why..."

"Man, what the hell, none of this makes any sense!"

The one to speak out an objection at that point was Barbatos.

"Come on, let's be real, you've killed *hundreds* of sorcerers but want peace? Who the fuck do you think you're convincing here?"

Frankly, Zagan was of the same opinion. And surprisingly, Raphael nodded as if saying that he even understood that.

"I know that all too well. I cannot become the banner for unification. That's why I needed the Maiden of the Sacred Sword."

Chastille raised her voice in a fluster as such a preposterously important role was thrust onto her.

"W-Wait a minute. It's not like I even accepted doing such a..."

Everyone present was unable to hear the rest of what she had to say, since with a clunk, the lump of stone that should have collapsed began moving.

When Zagan looked over to it, he noticed the monster that had been smashed in half was standing upright once more.



"Haaah... Seems there are immortal guys just scattered about everywhere, huh?"

Right after the Archangel who had his entire shoulder blown off came the

monster of the preceding Archdemon's legacy. Compared to those guys, Zagan was surely the one with more human weaknesses to him.

"I'll take care of it again. Just give me a few."

"Can you finish it off? That thing?"

In response to Raphael, Zagan shrugged his shoulders.

"Golems are out of my field of expertise, but if it's something made by sorcery, I can break it."

"That... is not a golem."

Zagan knit his brows as he heard the utter conviction in those words.

"What do you mean?"

"That... is what you bastards would call a chimera. Aside from the golem given birth to by sorcery, it is also..."

And with that, Zagan felt a chill run down his spine.

"...No, it can't be."

"Just so. That is something Marchosias made, a chimera of a demon."

Zagan was unable to deny that claim. After all, when he first saw this monster, the thing that came to mind was a demon.

That damn Marchosias, what a nuisance! Raphael then focused on the monster with an annoyed look.

"There's no mistaking it. That is the wreckage of the demon that Orobas and I defeated. Marchosias likely recovered it, and created that chimera."

Wreckage was ultimately just wreckage. It was likely nowhere near its original power, but even so, it was still a demon. It only stood to reason that just smacking it wouldn't bring an end to it.

Nevertheless, a smile crept up on Zagan's face. Just perfect. Shall I try testing out another ability?

The stone monster, the chimera of a demon, had almost finished regenerating itself. And in response, Zagan wove the 'Heaven's Scale' in his hand and stepped

forth.

"Chastille, you should go as well."

"I still... haven't said anything about going along with what you said, you know?"

"However, you should already damn well know what you intend to do."

Zagan couldn't tell what they were talking about, but Chastille returned a straightforward nod and took up her sword.

"I don't need you to tell me that. I shall wield my Sacred Sword as I see fit."

And then, Chastille quietly chanted out.

"I shall no longer waver. So lend me your power— Sacred Sword Azrael!"

The Flames of Purification... were a light this time.

A pale light, which was not at all reminiscent of Raphael's raging flames, coiled about the blade. However, it didn't feel transient at all.

Zagan could tell that she was taking the same power that Raphael unleashed as a flame and focused it only along the length of the blade. It had a sharpness to it that could even cut through Heaven's Scale.

This girl... When it comes to wielding the power of a Sacred Sword, isn't she even better than Raphael? And as Zagan stared at her in wonder, Chastille stood next to him.

"I won't ask you to believe in an Angelic Knight like me, but I want us... to fight together."

Zagan simply shrugged his shoulders in response.

"I doubt you're the type to try some underhanded scheme."

After watching her pitiful appearance for the last few days, he could tell that even if he didn't want to.

"Are you... praising me? Looking down on me?"

"Who knows."

Chastille puffed out her cheeks sullenly at that response, then turned her

head to the side in a huff and spoke.

"So, do you have any sort of plan?"

"There's one thing I'd like to test out, but I'll need a direct hit. I have to get right up in its face, you know?"

"Got it. Then, I'll take on the role of the outrider."

At that moment, the stone monster finally finished regenerating itself, and its googly and ominous eyeball turned toward them.

"It's coming."

"I know."

And as the hideous mouth on its forehead opened, the light of mana once more began gathering. It was clearly the very same breath of light that struck down Raphael.

Zagan focused his attention on the people behind him. *If I dodge, then the two of them will get hit.*

Barbatos was out of the range of the light, but there were two others who weren't.

It may have been possible for Foll to still evade, but Raphael couldn't move a muscle. Besides, he didn't like the idea of the attack being aimed at his daughter twice.

And, as Zagan put himself on guard, his field of view became obstructed with Chastille's back.

"Idiot, you don't even have your Anointed Armor on... You'll die!"

"I will hold its attention, so don't worry!" Chastille dashed forward as she yelled those words.

The monster's breath shot forth. And that light ruthlessly annihilated Chastille's body... Or well, it should have.

"HAAA!" Chastille swung down her Sacred Sword along with that spirited shriek. And the breath of light was split right in half by her blade.

Then, the light that split off to the left and right missed Zagan, Foll, and

Raphael and vanished.

"Let's go... Get moving, Zagan!" Chastille kept her pace and ran toward the monster as she threw those words out toward him.

Well, aren't you just full of surprises? That strike just now left even Zagan astonished. Which made sense, since he couldn't even see the moment she swung her sword.

Having said that, the difference in physical ability between Zagan and Chastille without her Anointed Armor was far too large. Zagan simply overtook Chastille in a single breath and entered the stone monster's range in a flash. However, the stone monster swung out its arm to intercept him.

"It's fast!" Barbatos let out a few dumbfounded words.

Contrary to the monster's large build, its speed was good enough to rival Zagan. Luckily, the size leads to a bunch of wasted movements.

It was a long sweeping strike, so Zagan had the time to thrust out his fist to meet it.

The stone fist of the monster was smashed as if it were brittle, its fragments scattering into the air.

"What the...?" However, the one left reeling was Zagan.

The scattered stone fragments were connected by an eerie black haze. And that broken wreckage changed its movements in midair as if possessing a will of its own, raining down incessantly onto Zagan.

So this is the reason it returns to normal after being smashed!? The stone body was simply transient, as its real body was the black haze lurking deep within.

"Don't stop now, Zagan!"

Those countless stone fragments were smashed by a pure white light as he heard those words. They both came from Chastille as she finally caught up to Zagan.

By the time Zagan thought he saw a white streak run through a stone fragment, the next sword strike was already on its way. The number of strikes

was easily in the double digits. And it was at such a high speed that one would think they were all occurring simultaneously. However, though the speed was fearsome, the truly terrifying thing was that those strikes came from behind Zagan and struck down objects in front of him. And yet, they never so much as left a scratch on him.

Instead of admiration, a cold feeling ran down Zagan's spine. *If she did this when we first met, wouldn't I be dead already?* If she had employed such swordplay when he first fought against Angelic Knight Chastille, Zagan would not have been able to put any of his techniques to use.

However, right now she was an ally he was entrusting his back to. And so, Zagan gripped Heaven's Scale he wove in his hand, layering on yet another framework of circuits to it.

"Burn to ash— Heaven's Phosphor!" And then, Zagan knocked against the monster's abdomen with a thud.

Yes, it was a fist which only amounted to a knock. It was a truly powerless attack unbecoming of Zagan, who was able to even crush stone with his fist. So, seeing that from behind, Chastille let out a flustered voice.

"Did you misfire?"

"...No, it's already over," Zagan calmly remarked. After muttering that and lifting up his right hand, Zagan clenched his fist as if he was crushing something with it. And immediately following that...

With a sudden flare, the stone monster was wrapped up by a black flame. The flame had burst out for but a single instant. And, as it ran across the surface of the stone as if dying it, the flame vanished.

With that, everything had come to an end. The blackened statue crumbled without a sound. No matter what regenerative power it has, once it loses its mana, it's simple stone.

The broken fragments that spilled over transformed to dust and dispersed before touching the ground. And in the blink of an eye, nothing remained of the chimera.

As Zagan turned around, he noticed that Chastille was standing stock-still with

her eyes wide open in shock.

"What... did you do?"

Zagan then wove together a magic circle in his hand to help explain the situation to her.

"There's this sorcery called Heaven's Scale, you see. This thing endlessly sucks up mana in its surroundings and continuously accumulates intensity as a shield, so all I did was reverse the effect and throw it into the enemy."

"Reverse the effect...?"

"It endlessly sucks up mana in the surrounding area... and makes it combust. The reason the flame looks black is because the mana itself is burning."

Heaven's Scale and Heaven's Phosphor... They were sorcery that utilized the same structure, two sides of the same coin so to speak. An anti-Sacred Sword, and anti-demon weapon. After obtaining Marchosias' legacy, Zagan had focused all his effort into developing those techniques.

And it seemed the proof was in the pudding. After all, it possessed enough power to burn even a chimera created from the remnants of a demon to ashes in an instant.

If a human sorcerer took that blow, they would be helpless. And in fact, it was so fiendish a sorcery that if the other Archdemons were to find out about it, they would be forced to declare it a forbidden art.

"Still, it's far too imprecise. If I don't raise the efficiency, it likely won't work on a real demon..."

The demon that Zagan had confronted possessed far more preposterous mana. As Heaven's Phosphor was now, a real demon would most likely destroy the sorcery before being burned to ash. Just like how Heaven's Scale was still incomplete, it seemed this one also still had room for improvement.

"You're... a terrifying sorcerer..." Chastille spoke like she was trembling, but her voice made it seem more like she was in awe of him. And that was why Zagan responded in kind.

"Your skills aren't all that bad either, Chastille."

As he said that, for some reason, Chastille opened her eyes wide and covered her face.

"...What?"

"No, it's just... This is the first time... you've called me by my name... is all..."

"Is that so?" Zagan wasn't really conscious of the fact, but now that she mentioned it, he realized he'd only ever referred to Chastille with 'you,' 'that girl,' or other things along that line.

"Well, sorry about that."

"Y-You're apologizing?"

"You're Nephy's friend, after all. I'll at least pay you some respect."

The manners of a sorcerer weren't all that different from the dignity of a bandit, though.

Chastille then puffed out her cheeks and glared at him.

"I didn't come here just for Nephy's sake. I came... to fight alongside you..."

Zagan stared back at her in wonder as he heard those shocking words.

"Even though we're a sorcerer and an Angelic Knight?"

"Yes, even though we're a sorcerer and an Angelic Knight."

Upon hearing Chastille's reply, Zagan felt a sense of safety that he'd never once experienced before in his life. *Entrusting your back to someone certainly isn't a bad feeling, huh?*

Even if it didn't fit his nature, he was about to put those thoughts into words. However...

"Zagan!"

As he turned around at Foll's cry, Zagan saw Raphael collapse in exhaustion.



"Seems I was able to bear witness to the fastest sword among the Archangels."

Lying down on the ground, Raphael formed a grin. Even now, it was a

ferocious smile that made it seem like he might attack at any moment, but he was actually just laughing.

"Don't talk too much. I'm bad at anything related to healing."

Zagan was giving Raphael first aid using sorcery, but the wound was too deep. At most, he could stop the bleeding. I seemed Raphael's luck had run out, as the regenerative ability of a dragon was weakening, barely allowing him to keep hold of his last grips on life.

Eventually, Raphael spoke in a weary tone.

"Chastille. No matter what you think of us, your actions themselves have already become our banner. Those who sympathize with me... will surely become your allies from here on out..."

"Lord Raphael..." Chastille gazed at Raphael with a complicated expression on her face as she said that. And with a 'however,' Zagan cut in.

"Talking about the Unification Faction or whatever again, huh? Barbatos said as much earlier, but I just can't see the point. If you're saying that you need a banner or whatnot, why not do it yourself? You're one of those damn Archangels, aren't you?"

"If it was only within the church, then that would be fine. However, it is just as that man said. I have... killed far too many sorcerers. If I were to call on them to join hands after all this time, they would never consent."

That was why he needed a person like Chastille. And Chastille was taken aback by that.

"Is that why you used Orobas' name? Because you thought nobody would believe you?"

"Partially, yes. But also, my survival and the creation of the Unification Faction were Orobas' dying wish. That is why his name is most appropriate as the leader."

To this man, Orobas' existence was just that absolute. And Zagan was able to understand that, but in the end, he wasn't really convinced.

"Then why did you kill so many sorcerers in the first place? Did you have some

sort of grudge or something?"

Zagan in no way planned to claim that sorcerers were virtuous. On the contrary, sorcerers were, without exception, all villains. He couldn't think of a reason not to hate them, but even so, killing nearly 500 of them was no small feat. He had to have a reason.

However, nobody was able to predict Raphael's answer to that question.

"I did not kill them because I wanted to. For whatever reason, sorcerers just kept attacking me."

"What...?" Everyone in the room let out a befuddled voice at once.

Raphael then muttered some words like he found it strange.

"I wonder why? All I did was attempt to have a gentlemanly conversation with them. Even when I showed them a smile to prove I wasn't an enemy, those damn sorcerers didn't listen at all and kept rushing at me. Of course I had to accept their challenges at that point, which always ended with me cutting them down."

Not able to understand just what he was saying, Zagan was in complete shock.

"...Wait a sec. Weren't you trying to provoke us back in that bar?"

"I simply intended to inform the bastard who was intimate with Chastille of the crisis that befell her..."

Zagan's head began to ache. And at the same time, Chastille shook her head in a bewildered state.

"H-However, when you first met me, didn't you ask me how many sorcerers I killed...? Oh, don't tell me that was just an act to hide that your true intentions?"

"What are you saying? You would serve poorly as a banner if you killed sorcerers as I did, would you not? And you replied that it was not a number to be proud of, which convinced me you were the one I was searching for."

Chastille was left at her wits' end after hearing that response and seeing the serious expression on his face. So, after that, she nodded.

"Now that you mention it, could it be that you were negotiating to have my Sacred Sword... Returned to me?"

"If an Archangel does not have a Sacred Sword, how can they protect themselves?"

It seemed that something similar had also happened with Chastille, so Zagan tried thinking back on his conversation with Raphael.

He had a roundabout manner of speaking, but it was certainly true that this man never once said anything about wanting to kill Chastille. Sure, he spoke of the church's views, but that didn't mean he agreed with them.

Well, if a sorcerer and Angelic Knight started acting all chummy, then it would end up with something like what happened to Chastille, huh? In other words, he was basically telling them to just sense his intent. Though it didn't look like that at all, honestly.

"But can you really kill near 500 people like that?"

"It simply ended up like that as I was attacked day after day. And when the sorcerers stopped coming, the church dispatched me to yet another region."

It seemed the cycle repeated itself as he kept changing locations, so the number had swelled up before he even knew it.

The story wasn't very convincing, but Zagan could understand that it was done unintentionally. And, as one would expect, he let out a sigh.

"Think about your damn outward appearance. Anyone would think of you as an enemy if you act weird while looking like that."

After Zagan pointed that out, Barbatos added on an 'Eh, that coming from you?' with an astonished voice, which made Zagan decide to smack him later. Then, he clenched his fist as Raphael slowly stood back up.

"Chastille... You should return to the church. I shall dispose of those who wish for your demise. I will surely be able to retain this life for at least that long..."

"Huh, do you know who the culprit is?"

"Let me ask you then, have you not realized the truth?"

It wasn't like she didn't have any ideas. And as she took in his words, Chastille's face had become notably pale.

Yes, with Raphael ruled out, there are few within the church who could be responsible.

Zagan wasn't well informed of the internal affairs of the church, but by process of elimination, only one person came to mind.

Finally, Raphael turned to face Foll.

"I promised to hand over my head to you, but I'll have you wait until then."

Foll was unable to respond to his words. So instead of that, she threw him a question.

"...Just answer one thing. What kind of dragon was Orobas to you?"

Raphael quietly nodded in return at her words, then answered.

"A great dragon. That moment I rode on that dragon's back and fought alongside him... was the best time of my life."

"...l see."

And as Raphael left, Foll did not try to detain or kill him.

"Is that alright?"

"...I don't know. But... I don't know... if it's correct to kill that man, either."

Zagan gently brushed the young girl's head to comfort her.

"Then, isn't it fine to leave it at that?" Zagan questioned as he held his hand out to Foll, then said, "Let's go back. Nephy must be tired of waiting."

"...Uh, mm."

Even Zagan didn't know whether it was correct to give up on her revenge. But still, he could tell Foll no longer held a deep-seated disdain for Angelic Knights.

That's why... it's surely fine like this.

It was possible that her hatred would resurface after all this. In fact, he was certain that she would waver eventually, too. Nevertheless, Zagan and Nephy had decided to stay by this girl's side.

And at that point, Chastille spoke up.

"Ummm, what about me?"

"Go back to your damn church, pony head," Foll said, driving Chastille to the verge of tears due to her naked hostility.

Somehow, before anyone realized, Barbatos had vanished. They had to take a long trek back to Zagan's castle due to his absence, and dawn was already breaking before they arrived. And yet, Nephy was still there, seemingly waiting to greet them.

"Welcome home, Master Zagan, Foll, Chastille."

And on that very same morning, Zagan and the others would hear of Raphael's fate.



"I see. So Chastille's whereabouts are still unknown..." Cardinal Clavwell muttered that as if in grief after receiving a report from Chastille's subordinates, the Knights of the Azure Sky.

"My deepest apologies. We have been nothing short of inadequate."

"It is not as if it is a fault of yours. I am the same in that I am anxious about Chastille's safety. For now, please rest."

"Ha!" With a bow and that spirited cry, the three knights left Clavwell's office.

As the door closed, Clavwell let out a sorrowful voice as if he was no longer able to endure it.

"Oooh... Chastille, my dear knight... Why... Why won't you just die for me?"

The face that was peeking out from both his hands was one that was repulsively warped.

"Sorcerers are evil. And those who are complicit with them are evil. If an Archangel is steeped in sin, then their replacement must enforce true justice in the place, right?"

If Chastille were killed, the Sacred Sword would choose a new, pure wielder. And this time for sure, he would raise them as the incarnation of justice. What he was scrupulously concealing was the fact that this was not even the first time Clavwell tried to assassinate an Archangel. Those who did not demonstrate the absolute power of the sword of justice, those who objected to Clavwell's inclinations, those who felt hesitation in killing sorcerers, and those simply unworthy of being an Archangel were mercilessly cut loose.

Fortunately, Kianoides was the domain of the preceding Archdemon, Marchosias. If they were directed to that devil, then nobody would doubt their death.

This was not a defeat for the Sacred Sword. Because the wielder was unsuitable, they were unable to utilize the true power and perished as a result.

That, in itself, could also be called the will of the Sacred Sword. However, the circumstances this time were a little different.

"That damn Raphael just had to do something unnecessary..."

Chastille had foolishly said that she didn't want to fight against the Archdemon. As such, they immediately confiscated her Sacred Sword, and the preparations for holding a ceremony for a grand execution were well underway. The reason it was delayed... was because there were objections from the other cardinals.

Yes, Clavwell was not protecting Chastille in the least. It was only because the other cardinals were stopping him that she was protected. And that Chastille... had taken her Sacred Sword and gone missing.

You unruly wench... Are you saying you didn't die from that poison? It was his treasured poison, which was produced for the purpose of torturing captured sorcerers. There was no way Chastille should have been alive after taking in something that was fatal to even the most powerful of sorcerers. And yet, neither her corpse nor the Sacred Sword had shown up anywhere.

If Raphael didn't suggest returning the Sacred Sword to her, then none of these troublesome matters would have occurred and everything would have been settled cleanly.

"Those three stupid knights are also useless."

Those three blindly served Chastille. That was why he had them monitored,

thinking that they would surely be able to find where Chastille was, but all they did was wander around town in a mess. No matter how much time passed, they never found her.

Or perhaps... they noticed they were been watched? Despite appearances, those three knights were ranked among the double digits as far as warriors in Kianoides were concerned. Even during the incident on the day Zagan succeeded Archdemon Marchosias, the three knights took chase after Chastille, and were said to have succeeded in rescuing her.

So, the logical explanation for them putting in so little work was that they noticed they would guide an assassin over to Chastille.

He had to think of another hand to play. And while he was groaning over such unpleasant thoughts, someone knocked on his door.

"...My apologies, I wish to be alone right now. Please leave what you need for later."

It wasn't that bad, but since he was high strung from anger, he didn't feel like he could calmly talk with another person. However, despite his instructions, the door to the room was violently kicked open.

"I'm coming in, Clavwell," a booming voice echoed, and the one who appeared was none other than the giant Angelic Knight Raphael.

"Wh-What are you...? You insolent knave...!" Clavwell raised his voice in equal parts fear and irritation, then immediately noticed something strange. Raphael was covered in blood. One of his arms was missing, and it was such a serious wound that his continued survival was nothing short of a miracle.

"Lord Raphael, just what is that wound...? No, putting that aside, we must treat it!" Clavwell quickly slipped some poison into his hand as he exclaimed those words. He didn't know what had happened, but this man was one of the 'evils' that Clavwell had to exterminate no matter what.

Clavwell wasn't sure exactly what his objective was, but he knew Raphael was trying to build up a new force within the Church. It was called the 'Unification Faction' or something, and if Clavwell were to find out they were a group who was against everything he stood for, he would likely not have made this choice.

Still, whether it was good or bad fortune, those who could imagine Raphael's ideology judging from his outward appearance did not exist in the church.

Raphael then plunked down in the chair in front of Clavwell.

"What, don't worry about it. I just came here to take care of some minor business. I'll leave right away."

"H-However..." And just as Clavwell said that and smothered the poison on his glove, reaching out to plaster up Raphael's wound with it...

"Huh...?" With a dull rolling sound, his arm tumbled across the floor.

"Unfortunately, I don't have particularily enjoy the idea of a hand smeared in poison touching me."

At a speed far faster than Clavwell could perceive with his eyes, Raphael severed Clavwell's right arm from his body.

"Ghhh... Urk?" And as he squatted down and began screaming, a foot covered in armor was jammed into his mouth. Several of his smashed front teeth scattered about the floor.

"Don't make such a fuss. Even though I may appear ruthless, this is the first time I've killed a human, you see? I'm just a little nervous about it."

Why... me? He couldn't speak those words aloud, but as Clavwell complained with his eyes, Raphael got the message loud and clear and replied.

"Both you and I have gone senile. It is not our place to stick our hands into each and every little thing the younger generation is doing. That is to say nothing of nipping their possibilities in the bud, of course," Raphael said, then drew his Sacred Sword.

"You get to meet your end on the blade of your beloved Sacred Sword, bastard. How about making a somewhat happier face?"

"Aggggggh!" Opening his eyes wide, Clavwell tried to shake his head but could do nothing with the leg guard dug into his mouth.

Somebody save me! Why was the Archangel of Kianoides not coming to save him? What happened to the three knights he just sent away? As the spokesman of God, the executor of justice, why did he have to have his life threatened by

such an 'evil'? However, no matter how much Clavwell wailed in his heart, the 'justice' that he believed in did not protect him.

"I will follow you shortly. Wait for me in hell," were the last words the man known as Cardinal Clavwell heard as a Sacred Sword came swinging straight for his neck.

And that was the very last scene Clavwell ever witnessed in this world.

Epilogue

"...I see. Like I thought, the culprit was Cardinal Clavwell, huh?" In a guest room of Zagan's castle, Chastille muttered those words in a somewhat lonely tone.

Other than her, Zagan, Foll, and Nephy were all gathered in the room where Zagan had just informed her of Clavwell's death. The one who tried to assassinate Chastille was none other than her superior, Cardinal Clavwell.

"That man... was one who never doubted the justice of the church." That's why he was fixed upon the idea that sorcerers were evil, and even considered Chastille, who made friends with one, to be an enemy.

Nephy then timidly posed a question.

"Chastille, did you know already?"

"Vaguely, I suppose. I had a feeling... but I didn't want to believe it. Still, it makes sense since he was the one who greeted me and poured me some tea just like always." That seemed to be why Chastille drank the poison without a shred of doubt.

Zagan then let out a snort with a 'hmph.'

"How foolish. There are no decent humans among a group who proclaims to represent true justice."

"Even before, you said something like that, huh?"

That was something that happened when they first fought. And as one would expect, in a dispirited state, Chastille slumped her shoulders.

"Even so, people want to believe what they're doing is correct. I wonder... is that such a bad thing?"

"Believing that is up to them. However, the moment they believe it may be wrong, they will definitely waver. In that sense, the culprit who tried to kill you is correct. He never wavered in trying to kill you, after all."

That was all justice came down to in the end. It was something people believed in wholeheartedly, which they would never waver from. When blind faith got too far, it always became fanaticism. The reason the church was strong... was because that lied at its foundation.

"You're as harsh as always, aren't you?" Chastille said as she formed a bitter smile, but it was not the face of one stricken with grief. And after taking a sip of the tea that was prepared for her, she stood up.

"I'm going to return to the church. I think the current state of it is strange. I won't say something conceited like I'll correct it, but I want to change it even if just a little."

"I see."

And with that short reply, Chastille once more formed a bitter smile.

"Even at times like this, that's all you'll ever say to me, huh?"

Zagan felt like he did something bad as he heard those words. Her accusation of him being heartless had come far too late, but having it said to his face still made him worry about it. And that was why Zagan pointed over to Chastille's cup.

"Truth be told, that tea is poisoned."

"Eeek?" Chastille raised her voice in a panic, looking fully ready to drop her cup.

She really is someone who gets easily shaken, huh?

After gazing at her panicking figure for a while longer, Zagan spoke to her in a tone that made it seem like he was confused by the fuss.

"...I'm kidding. Learn to doubt what others are telling you a little."

Well, even without Zagan telling her, Chastille likely knew it was a joke. And after holding her cup normally again, she glared at him fixedly.

"...No matter how you put it, wasn't that one just now in bad taste?"

"You think?"

"Of course it is. This tea... it was made by Nephy, right? And I was just about

to spill it all over, you know?"

Upon hearing those reproachful words, Zagan tilted his head to the side.

"Nephy isn't... the one who made that tea, you know?"

"Eh? Wait, really ...? Then, who made it?"

"Who knows," Zagan shrugged to dodge the question, but naturally, he didn't know how to make tea at all.

And while Chastille remained bewildered, she shifted her focus over to the only other one in the room, Foll. Well, it was possible that Nephy taught her how to make tea, but it wasn't likely that she would pour some for Chastille. Even Chastille surely knew at least that much herself. Still, in order to confirm the situation at hand, she knelt down in front of the young girl.

"In the end, I never got to have a proper talk with you, huh?" Chatille claimed, then stretched out her hand to try and touch Foll's head. Unfortunately, Foll immediately ended up hiding behind Zagan.

"Haha, ha... Well, looks like it'll be difficult to get along," Chastille laughed, clearly full of mirth, then stood back up.

"Come... again... Chastille," Foll spoke in a quiet, nervous voice. And as she suddenly started sobbing loudly, tears welled up in Chastille's eyes in response.

"Hic... F-Finally... You finally called me by my name!"

"So in the end... you're crying?" And with that, Foll also let out an exasperated sigh.

When her tears eventually stopped, she started to walk out of the room.

"It was only for a short period, but I've been in your care. I don't know if I can carry the burden of Lord Raphael's Unification Faction, but I will exert myself just a tiny bit in order to create a world where you can live more peacefully."

And then, a hoarse voice hung over her.

"I see. So you've finally made up your mind."

"I think it is beyond my means, but I'll do my best nonetheless."

"If something troubles you, you may call for my assistance anytime. Since I am

one-handed, what I can do is limited, but I will still lend you my strength."

The owner of that voice, who entered the room without a sound, was missing an arm and carrying a tea set.

"I am in your debt, Lord Raphael...?" Chastille started speaking, then suddenly raised her head in confusion. And loitering before her eyes... was a giant man that most would have had to look up at.

"Is it alright for you to get up already, Raphael?"

Yes. The one before them was none other than... Archangel Raphael. And as thanks for treating his wounds, he prepared tea in the morning.

"Indeed. From the beginning, I had Orobas' divine protection. If you even cast elven mysticism on top of that, such a shallow wound is not even worth mentioning."

Despite that, the arm he lost could not be recovered, which greatly impacted Raphael's power as an Angelic Knight. Pitying him for that, Zagan turned a fleeting glance toward him.

"Can you still swing your Sacred Sword with an arm like that?"

"I'm not yet at the point where I cannot fight. Besides, I am already old. The Sacred Sword will surely choose its next wielder soon enough."

"I see. Then, until it does, I'll be making full use of you."

"Heh, the compensation for using me is quite high, you know?" That was likely his way of saying that he would be taking a salary. The way he worded it was certainly hard to understand, but honestly, Zagan and this man may have just been the same in that regard. Thinking of it that way utterly depressed Zagan, though.

"Wait, what are you two talking so calmly about!?"

Zagan then made a grimace.

"Blahblahblah, shut it. Do you have a problem or something?"

"Isn't it obvious? I fully believed Lord Raphael had died..."

When they last parted, Zagan had thought much the same. However, this man

had faithfully presented his head out to Foll, so Zagan brought him over to the castle. Since Chastille had collapsed from total exhaustion, he never told her about it, though.

Zagan then pointed his finger at Raphael as spoke.

"Oh, come now. How else do you think I learned the details of Cardinal Clavwell's death?"

"Wait, really?" Chastille questioned, clearly surprised.

If not for that, there was no way rumors of a cardinal's assassination could make it out all the way to his castle. Even the church was surely scheming to conceal the scandal.

Chastille weakly sank to the floor as the truth dawned on her.

"Well, I'm rather relieved you're still alive."

"You're still too damn naive. If you act like that, then you won't even be able to complain if you're cut down from behind, right?"

As he spoke in a tone implying that he was going to cut her down right there, Chastille's face suddenly spasmed.

"Ah... You're saying that acting so kind without knowing people's true intentions could be the death of her, right?"

After Zagan calmly remarked on that, Raphael let out an exaggerated nod.

"As one would expect of my liege. The difference in your caliber is admirable."

"No, even I get it more or less... Wait, my liege you say?"

Seeing Chastille completely shocked, Raphael nodded like it was nothing at all.

"Now that you mention it, I haven't told you anything about it, I suppose. I have been hired as Lord Zagan's butler. As of this day, I have retired as an Archangel."

"EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE?"

Plugging his ears at Chastille's shriek, Zagan recalled the conversation he had with Raphael and Foll.

"Just as I promised, I have returned to present you my head."

Sensing Raphael, who had used up all his strength at the entrance to the castle with Zagan's barrier, everyone excluding Chastille ran out to meet him. And the very first thing that came out of his mouth as they did were those words.

This man was not the one who killed Orobas. However, it was also possible to call him the target of revenge. That was why Foll got to decide Raphael's fate.

After worrying over it for a minute, Foll came up a rather unique answer.

"Then, exhaust yourself for Zagan and Nephy's sake. That will be of benefit to me."

And just like that, Raphael also ended up working at Zagan's castle. With this, my research into the Sigil of the Archdemon should progress rapidly.

Zagan had acquired some knowledge regarding the Sacred Swords from Marchosias' legacy, but as expected, there was a big difference between having the real thing and not having it. If he was able to decipher the crests engraved on the Sacred Sword, then one day he would likely also be able to identify the true nature of the Sigil of the Archdemon.

Besides, even without that, with the maintenance of the castle and the management of Archdemon Palace, no amount of helping hands were enough.

If it was a subordinate that he could put his trust in, then be they sorcerer or Angelic Knight, he had no complaints. *Plus, there's more to someone than their first impression*. He knew that because if he hadn't met Nephy, he may have ended up just like Raphael.

Foll then looked up at Raphael inquisitively.

"Need something?"

"Is not having an arm... inconvenient?"

"Hmph... It is not something for you worry about."

"Hold on a sec..." Foll left Chastille's room with those simple words. Chastille had said that she was returning to the church, but having lost her opportunity to leave, she awkwardly stood in place and twiddled her thumbs.

Before long, Foll returned. And in her arms was an enormous left arm made of armor. She had put it away ever since coming to this castle, but it was the papier mache armor that she used when taking on the appearance of Apparition Valefor.

"...Crouch down."

"Hmm?" Raphael knelt down as he said that, puzzled by her actions, and Foll fit the armor around his left shoulder. Then, she muttered some phrases quietly, which made the empty armor shine with a pale light.

"With this, it should move."

"Oooh..." Raphael let out a sigh of admiration.

It was the same sorcery that Foll used to manipulate the armor. And it seemed she made it so that even Raphael could use it.

"To think that aside from Orobas, I would be greatly indebted to his daughter as well. I shall devote this life to thee."

"...That's a bit much." Though she turned her face away with a huff, Foll cheeks were just slightly dyed red.

And then, Chastille let out a somewhat dissatisfied voice.

"Um... Then... the only one leaving... is me?"

"Well, that's just how it is."

"No, but..." Chastille was on the verge of tears once again despite the fact that it was her decision to leave in the first place.

And since he was left with no other choice at that point, Zagan opened his mouth to speak.

"It's fine if you just come here whenever you want, right? Nephy and Foll would be glad."

"...Me too?"

"You too, right?"

Foll was making a face as if she wouldn't, but she didn't say anything to deny his claim outright.

And even then, Chastille looked up at Zagan's face.

"And you...?"

Since he never thought she would say such a thing, Zagan simply stared back in wonder. And after that, while scratching his head, he replied like it in a rather mundane tone.

"...Well, I wouldn't mind mingling while drinking some liquor... is about what I think of it."

With that, Chastille's face became enthusiastically cheerful.

"Okay! I'm also going to do my best!" After saying that, this time, the Maiden of the Sacred Sword went off on her way.

"Seriously, what a noisy... Huh?"

While Zagan was saying that, Nephy stood next to him, but turned her face away in a huff for some odd reason. Her cheeks were subtly puffed out, and he could tell that she seemed to be somewhat miffed.

"Nephy?"

"Whatever do you need?"

"...Why are you so angry?"

Nephy tilted her head to the side as if she didn't comprehend his question.

"Do I... appear angry to you?"

"I'm asking because you do..."

After Zagan said that, Nephy tightly embraced his arm as if she planned to trap him.

"Then, please figure out why."

Two soft bulges were pushing against him. And from them, he heard the sound of her heart beating awfully fast. Also, the tips of her pointy ears were slightly red, and he could see that they were quivering as he looked on.

She's angry, but expecting something too? Zagan worried over her difficult demand for a bit, and then touched her cheek.

"About last night, and how I left you behind... Sorry."

Nephy stared back in wonder as if she was astonished, then nuzzled her face gently against his arm.

"...Master Zagan, that's unfair."

And so, was Zagan's answer correct? Regardless of the answer, Nephy's mood seemed to have drastically improved.

"...Raphael, I can't see."

"Hear me, Foll. This is still too damn early for you."

Whatever the case, that exchange between the two of them could only be seen by the new resident of the castle.



Afterword

It's good to see everyone again. This is Fuminori Teshima speaking! I have come to deliver volume two of 'An Archdemon's Dilemma: How to Love Your Elf Bride.'

This time around, a daughter has been added into the hijinks of this awkward couple! And just like that, there's stuff like the young girl who's bad at expressing herself going 'Guess whooo' from behind, as well as the continued investigation into demons and the Sacred Swords. Plus, there's even a broken down female knight and a scary older knight getting saved or beaten up!

As for my plans from now on, I have some new works coming out next month, but I don't have much leeway with the pages this time around, so I'll omit the details.

Now then, allow me to give my thanks to everyone that I am deeply indebted to. To the one responsible for me, K. To the illustrator, COMTA. (Foll is too damn cute, I swear!) To everyone who took part in the cover design, proofreading, publicity, and such. To my children. And to you, my dear readers who have picked up this book. Thank you very much!

April 2017: On a Saturday where I can't really enjoy a day off

Fuminori Teshima

Bonus Short Stories

Sweet Temptation

"What is this, I wonder?" Nephy tilted her head to the side as she picked up the bottle that the lord of the castle had brought back. It was still about half-full of liquid, and it showed signs of being uncorked once before. Removing the stopper, Nephy tried taking a light sniff of its contents and noticed a somehow unusual scent from the bottle. A stimulating sensation ran from her nose to her throat, though it also seemed somehow sweet.

"Is this... liquor?" It was a precious commodity in the elven village, so this was the first time that Nephy got a chance to see some up close.

"I must think of the perfect meal to match it..." Nephy decided to ask her friend Manuela about what kinds of food went well with liquor when she had the chance. For the time being, she knew that there were all sorts of varieties of liquor. And so that she could think of dishes that would go well with it, Nephy poured just a little of the liquid in the bottle out onto her finger in order to verify its taste.

"...Erk, ack... Ugh..." A burning sensation in her throat assaulted her before she actually got any kind of taste. It seemed that this liquor possessed particularly high alcohol content. Even though she barely had a drop, she was dizzy.

For now, I need to cork the bottle... She couldn't allow the liquor that Zagan had gone out of his way to bring back to spill away. And so, as she sealed the bottle back up, Nephy realized something. The bottle only had half its contents left. In other words, Zagan had already had some of it.

"Master Zagan's... unfinished drink...?"

So, just how did he drink it? When Zagan came back, he wasn't carrying anything like a glass, so perhaps he put his lips directly on this bottle? Nephy's heart throbbed, her head was in a daze, and her body was hot. Then,

spontaneously, she touched her own lips.

"...Ah, just what am I thinking... I wonder..." Shaking her head, she pushed the bottle away. Still, if it was just a little, tiny bit, wouldn't it be fine as long as she wiped it clean afterward?

Nephy combed back her snow-white hair, then brought the tip of the bottle closer to her face even as her body trembled from immoral thoughts.

"Huh, Nephy? You're still up?"

Nephy sprang up upon hearing Zagan's voice come from behind her. And as she hastily sealed the bottle back up in a fluster, he peered in at her face.

"Huh...? Are you alright? Your face is real red, you know?"

"Awawa, i-it's nothing!"

She was burning up, and though she had already sobered up, for a short while, Nephy was unable to look directly at Zagan's face.

Just a Sip

"What's... this?"

Dawn. Foll tilted her head to the side as she looked at a bottle left in the kitchen. Nephy had likely put it there. Foll had been helping Nephy in the kitchen every day, but she never noticed it until now. And upon popping it open to take a look, a somehow sweet yet sharp scent wafted up to her nose.

"...It smells nice. A drink?"

A gulp rang out from her throat. The young Foll didn't know, but it was a strong liquor that could render an ordinary person unconscious with but a single glass.

"A sip should be fine..." Foll swiveled her head about and looked at her surroundings, and after confirming that nobody was around, she tried pouring some out into a glass. The golden liquid looked like honey, making it even appear sweet to the eyes.

"What's this...? It's amazing..." Foll stuck out her tongue and lapped up some

of the liquid, finding it to be an unexpectedly stimulating drink. The area from her throat to her chest became hot, and it felt like her entire body was stimulated. And just like that, the glass ended up empty.

"Wow..." Foll unintentionally let out an amazed yelp. Her vision was shaking and twirling about. However, it was strangely not an unpleasant sensation. On the contrary, it was so pleasant that she felt she would burst into laughter at any moment.

"Seems like something... Father would like." Foll suddenly became sad as she unintentionally spoke those words. Her father was no longer around. She became a sorcerer to avenge him, but even that wasn't enough to bury the sadness she felt. As she mulled over such thoughts, Foll left the glass behind and tottered out of the kitchen. And the place she naturally headed toward... was the throne room where the lord of the castle, Zagan, spent most of his time.

"...Hm? What do you need at this hour, Foll?"

"Can't sleep."

She was unable to say that she got lonely and came over. Zagan let out a small sight upon hearing her reply, but didn't turn her away. And as Foll plopped down in front of the throne, she leaned on Zagan's lap.

"Hey, this smell... It can't be... Did you drink some liquor?"

"Liquor? I just had some juice in the kitchen."

"Juice, you say...? Haaah... That was fine liquor, you know?" Zagan gently brushed Foll's head as he said that, despite his rather wistful tone. And finding his hand pleasant, Foll's eyes naturally closed.

"...Raising a daughter is quite a lot of work, isn't it?" Foll felt like she heard him say such a thing, but she had already drifted away into the land of dreams.

The Third Victim

"Nephy... isn't here, huh?" Chastille peaked into the kitchen wanting to ask where to throw out the trash, but nobody was there. Currently, due to certain

circumstances, she was living in Zagan's castle.

"Is she out? What to do..."

The castle was quite enormous. Moreover, if Chastille walked around, there was a high probability of her triggering some sort of trap, so it was difficult for her to search the place.

"I've got no other choice, then. Guess I'll just wait here."

It was almost noon, so Nephy was sure to return before long. Chastille then noticed an aroma hanging in the air. Taking a closer look, she saw a bottle and a glass left on the table. There was a little bit of liquid inside the glass as well, and its color resembled honey.

"Liquor...? I don't think Nephy drinks, so is it Zagan's?"

With no particular intent in mind, Chastille picked up the glass. Over the past few days, she had been going through nothing but horrible experiences. Zagan was... Well, setting that aside, Nephy always treated her kindly, but emotional scars were not easy to heal. That was why Chastille leaned back and gulped down the liquid left in the glass, which couldn't have been more than enough to fill a spoon.

"...Mmm, that really hits the spot!" It wasn't the first time she had anything alcoholic, but she'd never had something so delicious before.

"J-Just a little more's fine, right?"

The bottle was still a third full. Taking a survey of her surroundings, Chastille didn't sense anyone else around. There also didn't seem to be any signs that anyone was just playing a prank on her.

"Whatever, I'll just have another sip!"

After filling up the glass halfway, she knocked back a second cup. After that, a burning sensation flowed from her throat down to her chest, and her body got hotter.

"Hnnngh, that damn Zagan, keeping such a tasty drink all to himself... Uh, huh?" Chastille's vision began to twirl about. Seemed it was liquor that was strong enough to knock an ordinary person out with just a single glass.

"Haaah..."

The floor... is cold... My body... won't move... Am I... dying?

As Chastille collapsed in tears, she heard Zagan's panicked voice.

"Hey, crap, are you alright...? Haaah, even you ended up drinking some?"

Chastille's body stiffened up, thinking he would get angry at her, but instead her body gently floated into the air. Zagan was carrying her in his arms. She ended up showing him her pathetic side once more, but regardless, Chastille was just a little happy about how it all turned out.



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An Archdemon's Dilemma: How to Love Your Elf Bride: Volume 2

by Fuminori Teshima

Translated by Hikoki Edited by DxS

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