
SOL PRESS
BATTLE DIVAS
The Unshakable Winter Blossom Princess
STORY
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Battle Divas Volume Two
The Unshakable Winter Blossom Princess


Subdera's Diva
Lesfina
Revealing yet subtle...
And of course...
I'm going commando!


FWAHH...
Ahh, Cecilia! What are-
Althos' Diva
Cecilia
Freiya's Diva
Sharon
OH MY, FANCY FINDING YOU HERE. LET ME WASH YOUR-
N-NO, THIS IS ALL A MISUNDERSTANDING!
Althos' King
Alnoa


Eshantel's Diva
Kanon
"Hahaha! You again!? Be warned, I'm going all-out this time!"
"That's what I wanted to hear! See if you can match me!"

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A certain Goddess' overflowing sorrow.
A single, lonely petal dances through the air.

Gently dipping into a boundless lake,
spreading desperate ripples of grief into the nothingness.

The pure, honest,
fleeting ice petal scares away anyone daring to touch it.

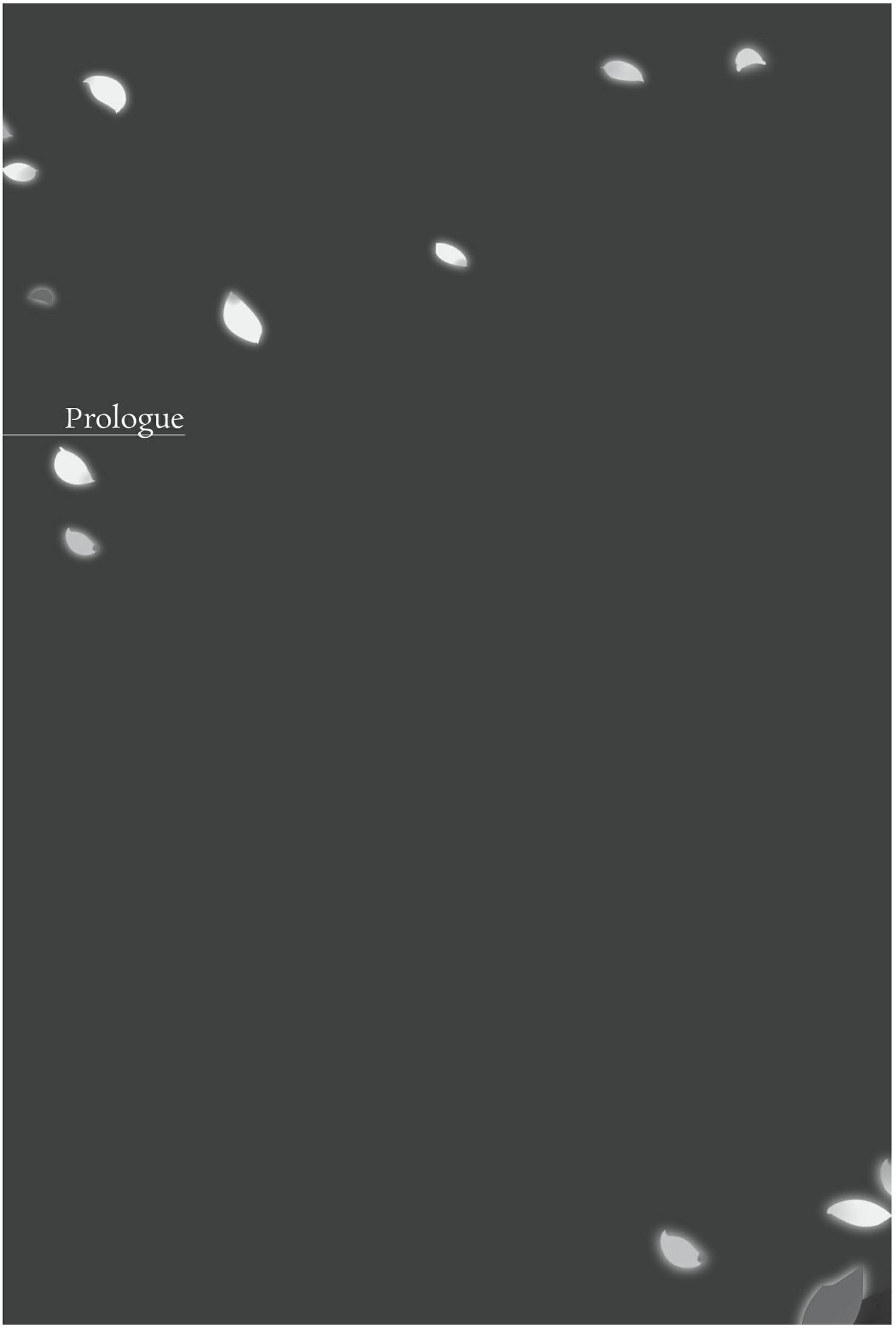
And so, she prays.

So that she could remain under the dazzling moonlight,
she wishes for a chaotic, faithful, powerful love.

She prays for the moon, wishing to melt in its corrupt,
depraved, defiled glimmer.

However, the jet-black sky and shining full moon above the lonely,
silently drifting petal are shrouded by thick clouds.

Excerpt from the battle record “Battle Divas - Volume Two”.



Prologue

“Wh-What’s going on!?”

The country was in flames. The cloudy skies dimly reflected the red light of the flames engulfing everything, from the castle they grew up in, to the small castle town they mischievously snuck out to play in, to the wonderful city sitting below their home. Every street, nook, and cranny was spewing thick black smoke toward the skies above.

On top of the hill that normally granted a clear view of the city, soldiers wearing unusually gaudy armor were wordlessly watching the complete destruction of their homes. Someone in the center of the group of soldiers, the only one in plain armor, took three steps forward.

“Why...? Why did this...?”

Their clear voice, along with the clinking of their armor, boomed over the hill with no regard for the steel helmet they wore.

“Inquisitor Kanon.”

A single soldier kneeled down behind Inquisitor Kanon and gently called out to them.

“I step out for a few days and this happens... Who in the world dared to...?”

Kanon’s homeland, Eshantel, was a much smaller country than its neighbors, but its military power rivaled that of the Empire’s. But just in a few days, while they were out exterminating bandits, the country somehow fell into an unspeakable ruin.

“Hehehe, how unsightly, Eshantel’s Inquisitor.”

The mocking, nerve-wrenching whisper came from behind Kanon.

“Who’s there!?”

“Stop, Toshisaka!”

The soldier paid no heed to Kanon’s orders and drew his sword while turning around. Putting all his rage into his blow, he swung toward the target, but...

“Hehehe, too slow. Way too slow... and way too weak.”

The tip of the sword was stopped by a single snow-white finger.

snap!

It snapped in half, seemingly without any resistance.

“Wha--!? My sword!”

Toshisaka made sure he wouldn’t kill his target. He checked the enemy’s position before the strike and planned to stop the blade before it could cause a lethal injury. But that didn’t explain how an ordinary person could stop it with their bare hands. Not to mention his sword, which was an expertly crafted masterpiece. No ordinary person should have been able to break it in half with just one touch. He was standing there in utter shock, switching his gaze between his broken sword and the pale-skinned, blonde-haired girl that appeared out of nowhere.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t think it’d actually break.”

The girl casually dropped the broken blade before her while apologetically waving her hand.

“Hey, you. Are you a Diva?”

Contrasting Kanon’s casual tone, their orchid eyes gleamed with tension. Kanon clenched their teeth, bent their body, and unsheathed their sword.

“Hehehe. Why yes, I am. I’m the Empire’s Diva, Eleanor, and he is our commander-in-chief, Gil.”

“Eh!? When did he--!?”

Words escaped their clenched teeth. Kanon should’ve been on high alert, but somehow, they missed the person standing right behind Eleanor.

He’ll be quite the handful himself.

Kanon thought, licking his parched lips. They realized the chance they had been granted and had no intention of letting it slip. The Empire was their greatest enemy, meddling with Eshantel’s business at every chance they got. Now that the commander himself had appeared on the battlefield, there was no doubt that they were behind the destruction brought upon their land.

“Then I’ll take your head and mount it in front of the graves of my fallen comrades, Commander!”

And the one responsible was standing right in front of them.

“There!”

Overtaken by rage, the steel-clad Kanon sprung toward the enemy with such speed that not even Toshisaka, a veteran soldier, could comprehend it.
Eshantel’s victory was secured with this physics-defying attack. Or so they thought, but...

“Gahhhhhh!”

As if a meteor had struck the hill, the earth shook below their feet. Desperate cries filled their ears and a massive amount of dirt and sand clouded their vision.

“Inquisitor!”

Not even Eshantel’s army, the strongest on the continent, could do anything in the face of such a sudden, mysterious attack.

“Hehehe, did you expect me to leave anyone foolish enough to try laying a finger on my dear brother alive?”

Eleanor said in a charming voice from behind the curtain of dust.

“Heh... I suppose the name Blonde Demon isn’t just for show.”

As the rain of pebbles and dust settled, the figures of Eleanor and Gil appeared in the middle of the impact.
Right next to them was Kanon, taking Eleanor’s long spear with their sword.

“Hehehe, this is a bit of a letdown. I expected more from the Inquisitor who can supposedly match the Divas. Not only that, but this power is...”

“What do you mean by that!?”

Kanon sneered at the smiling Diva while struggling to keep her spear at bay. The thick bloodlust surrounding the two was practically visible.

“Sheath your weapon, Eleanor. Inquisitor, may I ask you to do the same? We have come to talk.”

In the midst of that tense atmosphere,
Gil casually walked up to them, as if he was taking his afternoon stroll.

“Tch!”

Kanon once again failed to pick up on his presence.

“You want to talk after wreaking havoc on my country!? Don’t bother.”

Kanon collects themselves and takes a step back, firing their palpable bloodlust at Gil, who’s completely unfazed by it.

“M-My dear brother!”

“Worry not.”

He held Eleanor back with one hand and walked toward Kanon.

“Let me preface our discussion with a simple fact: Your country wasn’t destroyed by us.”

”...”

Gil began his explanation despite Kanon’s seemingly unchanged attitude.

“It is certain that we, the Empire, want this country. Do you understand? The country!”

“What does that mean?”

Kanon took a step forward without hiding their anger, but Gil stopped right in front of them and put on a dead-serious expression.

“The country. That means its citizens, its land, its resources, its culture, its buildings. We want everything. Do you think we’d bother with your land in its current state, devoid of life and value?”

Gil shot a sharp gaze at the Inquisitor.

“A ravaged land...”

Kanon said painfully.

“I came here to warn you of the Demon King, but it seems I was too late...”

Kanon finally saw the mysterious crystal in Gil’s hands,
which had an emerald green flame burning inside.

“The Demon King? And what the hell is that crystal?”

What nonsense is he spouting?

Kanon's eyes were drawn to the crystal.

"Althos' new ruler is the Demon King. Or so the rumors say..."

Of course, those rumors were spread by the Empire themselves, but Gil continued with a straight face.

"Seeing what happened here, I suppose we can't call them rumors anymore."

"You're saying that Althos' king, who is, in fact, the Demon King, came here and destroyed my country? Sounds like a fireside tale to me."

"So does the existence of Divas. If the rumors are true and Alnoa is indeed the Demon King, then it's my duty as the resident of this continent to rally the Divas and seal the evil as prophesied."

Kanon wanted to sneer at him again, but he remembered something.

"Wait, if Althos is...! Feena... What happened to Subdera's Diva!?"

Kanon accidentally let her nickname slip. Gil walked up to the stunned Inquisitor and whispered the answer into their ear.

"Who knows... But rumors say that both Freiya's and Subdera's Divas were either imprisoned or subjected to mind control after accepting Alnoa's marriage proposal."

"No... Then Feena..."

Hearing the possible dangers Feena may have fallen into, Kanon absentmindedly whispered her name with their eyes fixated on the crystal.

"The revival of the Demon King is a danger to every living being on this continent. As such, I have a proposal for you: Let's put our little quarrels aside for the time being and form an alliance to subdue the Demon King. Of course, the Empire is more than willing to lend a hand."

"Okay. I agree."

The steel helmet nodded in agreement to the meek, innocent-sounding proposal.

"Inquisitor Kanon! We're dealing with our sworn enemy, so please be more

cautious--”

“Toshisaka. Don’t forget that I’m your master while Father’s whereabouts are unknown! Do you still have any objections?”

Kanon answered him in a quiet but sharp tone.

“Inquisitor Kanon...”

He nodded, cursing his own impudence. It was already too late. While he was standing there silently, Kanon fell into the Empire’s carefully laid trap. Gil’s words reverberated through the crystal, creeping into the young Inquisitor’s ears right as they were mourning the loss of their country and their failure toward their friends. As if the devil himself had enticed them using their biggest weakness...

Ch.1 Scattered Emotions



A few days after the fight with the Empire.

Al ordered Brusch to report on the Empire's movement in Eshantel, while Jamka was working on strengthening Althos' defenses to prepare for an invasion. Of course, Al wasn't wasting his time, either. He's been holed up in his late father's chamber from dawn until dusk, searching high and low for any information about the Demon King. Unfortunately, though, without any results to show for it.

"Arghhhhh! I knew this wouldn't be easy, but come on already...!"

He slumped into his late father's chair and tossed the book into a corner of the room. His eyes drifted to the few rays of light that managed to penetrate the drawn curtains. It seems as though another day has dawned upon him.

"I even found the hidden door, but still nothing..."

He let out a tired sigh before falling into deep thought again.

How have I not found anything after all this searching? Did my dad destroy all the documents before his death? Or did he hide them somewhere else? But where? I can't think of any other place than this. The only place I haven't checked is the basement… What could I find if I go down there again? There's nothing except for the door sealing the Demon King. There's no point in going there again.

He reached his conclusion.

"I'll have to ask Lilicia again."

He whispered to himself and got ready to leave the room. The castle corridors were painted orange by the first rays of the sun peeking in through the windows. Stumbling his way toward his office, he caught the attention of a maid and asked her to order Lilicia there.

There was no other way. A few days had passed since her transformation, but she was still working as the head maid. Of course, as she's a succubus, Al has considered chasing her out of the castle with his sister, Cecilia, but their lack of workforce was more concerning than Lilicia's goal to revive the Demon King. They concluded that keeping their enemies close would be a wise choice. Interestingly, Lilicia agreed to that proposal as well and swore absolute loyalty

to Al. Though the integrity of her declaration was questionable at best. Because of that,
they decided to apply Cecilia's unique skill, Bind, and force her to never be able to lie to Al. However, they cannot be certain how effective spells are against a succubus. It's a pity that no matter how much she'd try to help, they could never trust her word blindly. That's why, instead of asking her directly, Al decided to fish through his father's chambers, but...

"Oh my, you took some time."

Lost in thought, Al wasn't exactly rushing to his office. Lilicia got there before him and was stretching out in front of the door while flashing a wry smile.

"Ah, well... Anyway, let's go in."

That smile reminded him of the events that transpired in the basement, so he entered his room slightly unhinged.

"Is it only the two of us, Your Majesty?"

After respectfully bowing to Al, Lilicia followed him into the room. Seeing her humble attitude calmed Al a bit, but maybe he was just being naive due to his severe lack of sleep.

"Yeah. Otherwise you wouldn't say a thing."

"Oh, I'd talk about anything you'd like. Except for the Demon King, that is."

Lilicia said with a cheeky smile. She was telling the truth. Every time Cecilia or any other Diva was nearby, she'd dodge all questions regarding the Demon King.

"Take a seat."

Al offered her the sofa while he himself sat down on his desk. If it came down to it, the greatsword decorating the wall would be within his reach. Lilicia easily saw through his intentions and stood next to the sofa with an even bigger smile on her face.

"Don't worry, I have already mentioned that I would never lay a finger on the Demon King's vessel. Furthermore, Lady Cecilia's Bind is still active.

Lilicia said.

“Right, then let’s take a seat here.”

We won’t get anywhere otherwise.

He steeled his heart and sat down.

Now, where should we start?

Not a single word was spoken for a few seconds after they sat down. Al was grinding his gears, trying to find the proper question.

“Oh my, why are you staring at me so intensely? Have you been charmed by your maid’s beauty?”

Contrasting Al’s nerves, Lilicia laughed carelessly.

“Hehe, now I understand why you invited me into your chambers alone. May we continue where we left off last time?”

She instantly jumped up from the sofa and slipped into the bed without any hesitation.

“No, sorry, I didn’t call you here to fool around!”

“Who’s fooling around? I’m always ready for you, Your Majesty. I’m a succubus, after all.”

Al approached the bed to drag her out, but understanding the gravity of the situation, Lilicia stood up by herself, looking as disappointed as ever. Or so he thought, but her disappointed gaze quickly changed into a bewitching leer.

“There!”

She jumped on Al and pushed him onto the sofa.

“Hey, what the--!? How are you so strong!?”



“I’m a succubus.”

Without losing her enchanting smile, she got on top of Al in a moment’s notice.

“So, what should we do?”

She suggestively licked the tips of her fingers. That inhuman charm bewitched Al; his body was rapidly heating up and his sleep-deprived mind was being overloaded by the extreme sensations.

If I don’t stop this now, things are gonna get bad!
Al used the bounciness of the sofa to his advantage and made Lilicia lose her balance.

“Now!”

He successfully switched positions with her.

“How assertive of you, Your Majesty.”

Wearing her maid uniform, she was pinned to the bed by Al. He’d most definitely be in a tough spot if someone walked in on them, but he didn’t have the luxury to worry about such details now.
“Lilicia. Tell me everything you know about Heavenly Surge and its relation to the defeat of the Demon King and the Divas.”

Al got straight to the point.

“Haah... What a boorish face and question given the situation.”

“Hey, what’s your problem with my face!?”

Pinned below Al on the sofa, Lilicia’s cheeks were slightly flushed, as if she were expecting something completely different.

“Heavenly Surge... An explosive increase in magical power when the Demon King’s scythe and the relics, as well as the Demon King’s and the Divas’ feelings, intertwine and empower each other.”

But she suddenly switched back to serious mode, sat up, and leaned close to Al, leaving only a couple inches between their faces.

“There♥”

Al instinctively flinched back, but he couldn't stop having the tides turned once again. Lilicia was celebrating her victory, while Al was cursing himself for letting his guard down. As he realized that his waist was trapped under Lilicia's legs, his lower half began wriggling lasciviously. Her plump thighs and the tiny, thin layer of fabric covering her girly bits that was peeking out from under her skirt were tempting Al to enter nature's treasury.

"But in this castle, just above the Demon King's shrine, the magical energy would considerably increase even without the scythe."

Ah, so that's why Cecilia grew so powerful back then...

While Al was beginning to grasp the ins and outs of Heavenly Surge, Lilicia was enticingly sliding her waist up and down on his lap.

"H-Hey! Stop..."

Knowing full well that Al was fighting his urges, Lilicia began to unbutton her clothes in a slow, teasing manner.

"Whyyy? Our feelings intertwine better when our bodies do the same, Your Majesty."

No matter how hard he tried, Al couldn't take his eyes off of Lilicia's bosom, relentlessly trying to escape the confines of her clothes. While he was busy trying to escape the bewitching mounds, Lilicia leaned close in and looked at him with lust-filled eyes. At the same time, he could feel her breasts push up against his chest. His head was spinning from the wild sensation; he was about to lose control of his already vigorously wriggling lower half. Lilicia pushed forward to test Al's resolve.

"You know, having certain body parts touch and exchanging magically-charged bodily fluids works great too. For example, exchanging blood, saliva, sweat or #$@& would definitely trigger Heavenly Surge."

"#$@&!? Are you serious!?"

She wouldn't actually go that far... would she?

Lilicia watched Al take a huge, nervous gulp.

"The more you do it, the mixed bodily fluids--no, the magical energy gets

thicker, causing Heavenly Surge to get more powerful.”

Swimming in pleasure, she continued sharing valuable information.

I want to know more about Heavenly Surge, but this is bad. If I don’t do something, I’ll become her plaything!
Still in a daze, he once again wrapped his arms around Lilicia to get on top, but...

“Shhh♥”

“Eep!”

Lilicia stopped his master plan with a sweet, gentle blow into his ear.

“Your Majesty, how am I supposed to finish my explanation if you’re so forceful?”

She said without any hesitation at all. To be fair, she was right in a way, but that wasn’t the point Al was expecting to deal with. He was already tired of dealing with his eager libido, ready to take over his entire being every time Lilicia started grinding herself on top of him, but it’s not something he could tell her outright. She’d probably do it even more only to tease the young king.

“Yeah, you’re right. Thanks, and sorry for calling you here on such short notice. You can get back to work now.”

Because of that, he decided to go with a more cool-headed strategy, but instead of going along with it, Lilicia pushed her lasciviously bouncing breasts together and shared a critical point in a seductive tone.

“Why the hurry? I talked about Heavenly Surge, but I haven’t said a word about the Demon King yet, have I? Like how in the seal will break in just a few years and such.”

“Oh my, you didn’t know? Anyone with the slightest knack for magic would have realized it from all that magical energy seeping through the door.”

She suddenly transformed into the same vixen that fooled Al down in the basement. Al clearly found her revolting.

“Wanna know how to reapply the seal?”

She said it teasingly. She's like the incarnation of the term playing with fire. He wanted to tell her that he'd do something about it and leave it at that, but based on the results of his search so far, he knew he wasn't in a position to deny valuable information and, sulking, let her continue.

"Hehehe, I'll reward you for being a good, honest boy. Reapplying the seal is quite simple, all you have to do is to perform Heavenly Surge with all seven Divas."

"Wait, I have to do Heavenly Surge with all of them?"

She nodded.

"Exactly! The power of the seven Divas, the Valkyrie's strength will amass inside you, which will strengthen the seal to the point where the Demon King won't be able to do a thing!"

She seductively ran her fingers down Al's chest, as her jiggling, ripe watermelons hypnotized him.

The old lady from the canteen naked, Dante's fat belly...

He imagined everything he could think of to resist the temptation.

"Oh, and please keep this a secret from all the Divas, including Cecilia. It'd be too much fun if they-- Ahem, it would greatly influence their feelings if they found out."

Wait, what was that!?

In an attempt to play dumb, she looked away and enticingly put a finger to her lips.

"But it's okay if I know it?"

He tried attacking back, but...

"It's completely fine! Not like you can control your emotions either way!"

"Ughhh!"

It backfired.

"Is there anything else?"

She gently nibbled on the young king's ear. Seeing him tense up from it, Lilicia chuckled.

"Uhhh... There's one more thing."

Completely defeated, he still found one last point of interest in what she said.

"You're a succubus whose goal is to revive the Demon King. Why would someone in your position tell me the way to stop all that?"

She was supposed to be working on reviving the Demon King, but everything she said in this room goes against that goal.

"Tell me, why?"

He asked with a shaky voice. And a moment later...

"Pfahahaha! What are you so nervous about? I didn't know Your Majesty was such a scaredy-cat!"

She burst out in tears.

Please, for the love of God... They're jiggling too much!

Perhaps she somehow sensed Al's desperate cries, as Lilicia wiped her tears and calmed down a bit.

"I told you, I wouldn't lay a finger on the Demon King's vessel, and I'm still under Cecilia's spell."

She couldn't lie to him. He knew that very well.

"And don't get me wrong, helping you now also helps out the Demon King. If the seal is to break before the vessel is ready to host it, the Demon King's power will simply run rampant."

"Is that so?"

"Oh, yes. Have I ever lied to you?"

She said, smiling when she saw that Al had calmed down a bit.

"Well, there was the thing about you being a succubus and all that!"

"I would've told you if you had asked."

Lilicia puffed out her cheeks.

Talk about backward logic!

Al stared at her intently.

“And I’ve been enjoying the years I spend with you and Cecilia, so I’m thinking I could just wait for the next vessel to revive the Demon King.”

Al was speechless before her cute, content smile after she suddenly snapped back into head maid mode. Lilicia slowly brought a finger to her lips and...

“Don’t forget, it’s a secret!”

Then she slowly pushed her finger against Al’s lips, got off of him, and left the room.

“H-Hey! Lilicia!”

He remembered one last thing he wanted to ask, so he sat up and called out to her.

“Say, why won’t Jamka’s arm heal? His body fully recovered after being split open by the scythe.”

When Jamka showed him his injury later, there wasn’t a single scratch where his arm was separated. But Cecilia said that his arm began breaking down in front of her eyes.

“Beats me. Maybe it has something to do with that red crystal Lesfina is studying. But more importantly, try using your head sometimes too. You’ll go dull if all you do is ask questions.”

Without even turning around to give an answer, she left the room. Al didn’t even have the strength to comment on her rude demeanor.

“Haaah. Geez, just how much can I trust her?”

Wiping off the spot where Lilicia touched his mouth, he stared at the closed door in the empty room.

“Damn, what a gloomy place.”

Al wiped the cold sweat from his forehead and entered the dim corridor. He was heading toward the basement, where only the members of the royal family can set foot. He felt inclined to visit it again after his discussion with Lilicia.

“I didn’t really want to come, but here I am...”

Finding out that the kind, wonderful, trustworthy maid who’d been at his side since he was a toddler was a succubus was incredibly difficult for the young king to swallow.

“And it’s not even some baseless rumor, she herself admitted to it.”

Recalling her last words from their talk made him flinch in disgust. Fighting off his instincts, he pressed forward.

“I’m only here to confirm what Lilicia said, nothing else. I achieved Heavenly Surge with Sharon once, so if what she said is true, there should be some sort of change here.”

He mumbled to himself. And then...

“The door to the seal.”

He sighed, arriving at the giant, pitch-black door.

“What’s this...? I don’t feel hot or cold...”

He had prepared himself for the worst based on his previous visit, but there was nothing. The magic seeping through the door had considerably decreased as well.

“Was she telling the truth, meaning the seal has grown stronger?”

No signs of dizziness or nausea.

“I didn’t just get used to it... did I? I mean, I’m the Demon King’s vessel, so I very well may have, but... nothing about me has changed since my last visit.”

Despite the time he took to deliberate his options, the magic seeping through the door didn’t have any effects on his body.

“Maybe I can... trust Lilicia after all?”

Eyes glued to the door, he quietly murmured to himself.

The next morning, Al woke up in his bed. The bright sunshine peeking through the curtains indicated another wonderful day. But no matter how perfect the weather was, Al didn’t feel on the top of his game, and he knew exactly why. His head had been spinning ever since yesterday’s talk with Lilicia.

“If I don’t perform Heavenly Surge with all seven Divas, the Demon King will revive, huh? It kind of makes sense, but it’s still weird… Though after seeing the seal for myself, I have to believe her for now. Heavenly Surge, huh...”

He was absentmindedly murmuring to himself.

“You’d like to do Heavenly Surge?”

“Ah no, it’s not that I necessarily want to...”

He honestly answered the sudden question.

Wait, did I hear someone ask me that?

He was certain he heard a voice, but his door was bolstered with dozens of defensive spells. Currently, his room had better defenses than the royal treasury.

“Nhhhh!”

At least, it was supposed to have better defenses.

No, it can’t be. It can’t be, can it?
But his pleas were...

“So fluffy and warm...”

Destroyed by the small figure snuggling his blankets right next to him.

“Wh-Why!? How!?”

He turned around dumbfounded...

“Morning, Al.”

He saw Feena hiding under the blankets next to him.

“Morning, Feena. What brings you here on this wonderful morning? Sharon did something similar not so long ago, is slipping into someone’s bedroom while they’re sleeping some sort of custom abroad?”

He was slowly but surely coming to his senses, but he still was far from being able to grasp his current situation. That’s probably why he started such a calm, normal conversation.

“No, it’s different. Sharon was wrapped up in ribbons, but I’m wearing

something else.”

Then, she dealt the finishing blow.

“Revealing yet subtle, a single white shirt.”

“What’s revealing and subtle about a white shirt? I don’t get it.”

Al pushed the blankets away as he tried to escape the gravitational pull of his bed. As he turned around, he finally spotted Feena sitting up on his bed, wearing an oversized white shirt. The shirt was unbuttoned down to her cleavage, revealing her crystal-clear, snow-white skin that put any white fabric to shame, and her elegant, beautiful thighs were peeking out from the bottom of the shirt.

“W-Wait, you literally meant nothing but a--”

“I’m. Not. Telling~!”

Wearing only that white shirt and maybe a pair of panties, her white skin struck something dormant in Al’s soul, as he became unable to take his eyes off the quiet girl.

“...”

His heart thumped louder than ever. He found her adorable, no matter how much of a nuisance this was. Lately, the way she was always tiptoeing around him like a kitten had become more endearing to him, and he’d recently become able to read the slight changes in her expressions.
Even though she said multiple times that she wanted to turn him into a puppet with a blank face, everything she did was incredibly helpful for Al. She might not have worn a warm smile, but deep down, she was a kind girl. Or so he thought.

Wait, what if I’m already under the spell that turns me into her puppet!?

But he quickly denied that idea.
After all, the Demon King’s seal negates any and all attacks coming from a Diva.

But then, what is this feeling? The last time I felt something like this was when I did Heavenly Surge with Sharon.

“Feena...”

He took a big gulp in an attempt to calm himself down.

“Wait, I’m not done yet!”

She got overconfident from her seemingly successful plan, so she got a bucket full of water from God knows where.

“Aaand...!”

splash!

She proudly poured it over her head.

“Wh-What the hell are you--!?”

Al was dumbstruck. The outlines of Feena’s body were completely visible through the drenched, completely transparent, thin white shirt. Not only that, but...

“I’m going commando!”

She explained boastfully with a slight hint of pink coloring her cheeks. With her over-the-top levels of teasing, she was already sure of her victory. It was only natural; with her invitingly peeking snow-white legs and transparent white shirt sticking to her skin, no one could fault Feena for proclaiming her victory. If you looked at her, that is.

“Then tell me: why in the world would you soak my bed!?”

The previous understanding, appreciation, and awe for Feena quickly drained from Al’s eyes as they followed the water quietly dripping down from his bed to the floor.
Unsure of what to do with the drenched bed, he looked at Feena, devoid of empathy or appreciation.
“Why aren’t you jumping on me, Al? I read that men are the most active in the morning-- Achoo!”

Feena was rudely interrupted by a sneeze.

“Heeeey, youuu! What were you thinking!? You’ll catch a cold if you drench yourself wearing only a thin shirt!”

“Kyahh!”

In one fell swoop, he covered her with a blanket and picked her up.

“Al?”

Al looked back at the confused girl with a slightly frustrated expression.

“Just stay put for a moment!”

He passed by the sofa and put Feena down in front of the fireplace.

“Fireball!”

Then he threw a small fireball into the fireplace, creating a warmly dancing little flame.

“Stay there until your clothes dry!”

Geez, she’s always so reckless!

He turned around and sulked his way to the bed with big, audible steps.

“How do I even clean up this flood?”

He was standing still and tapping his temple, when...

“Let me dry it up.”

He suddenly felt Feena standing behind him.

“No, don’t you dare cast a fireball in here! The whole room will go up in flames!”

She put on a smug smile after hearing Al’s complaints.

“I’m not an idiot.”

She said as a gentle wind began dancing around her.

“Diablo Gale.”

The warm wind gently brushed his cheeks, but then...

“Hey, I know this won’t burn my room to a crisp, but--”

The gentle breeze quickly turned into a raging wind and swept over the room.

“Don’t worry, I’ll-- Ah!”

She was blasted through the window by the strong wind before she could finish her sentence,

which normally wouldn't be a huge issue, but they just so happened to be on the top floor of the castle.

"Feena!"

Al rushed to the window, but...

"That was close."

Feena quickly cast Levitate and landed softly with the blanket still wrapped around her.

"...At least she isn't hurt. Well, nothing will get done if I stand here and mope, so it's time to get my morning exercise."

Looking around the empty, devastated room, he completely gave up on cleaning it up. Taking the advice someone had once left him with, he quickly changed from his pajamas and left for the castle gates with his scythe.

The moment he stepped into the corridor, Al ran into a maid.

"G-Good morning, Your Majesty!"

She flinched for a moment due to the ominous scythe Al was carrying but quickly collected herself.

I feel like I'm just feeding into the rumors with this.

He returned her greeting halfheartedly, as he was too busy staring at the scythe in his hand.

"..."

It looked like a simple, ordinary scythe.

"Either way, I have to admit that this is a pretty useful weapon."

In a normal war between humans, he'd have had Cecilia seal it away, but it was an invaluable weapon when it came to saving people from abominations. In face of an invasion from the Empire, they would most definitely need to use that scythe. But Al himself also had to get stronger in order to shoulder his dreams of protecting his people. And physical strength wasn't the only area he had to improve in. He had to forge his will as well if he wanted to stop the Demon King from taking over his body. But everything started with mastering

that scythe.

He arrived at the castle gates while mulling over these ideas. It was the same place they had the meeting with that slimy slave trader not so long ago. The training grounds sat on the right side of the gates, though calling it that might have been an exaggeration. It was a simple, plain area with a single storage room for swords and a couple of logs for training. Even then, there were usually quite a few people training there in the afternoon, but there was no one to be seen at such an early hour, which Al was incredibly thankful for. He didn't want to unnecessarily strengthen the rumors about him being the Demon King.

"Fuuu... Good!"

He looked around once more to confirm that he was alone.

"Haaa!"

He slashed downward with all his might, tracing the arc from the basic technique Jamka had taught him. He had undergone training with basic weapons in the past, but had rarely used a scythe before, so his skills were not at a level suitable for the battlefield. He'd cheated death during his last battle, but there was no guarantee luck would side with him again. As such, he was training as much as he could.

"Haaa! Arghhh! Ughhh!"

He was confidently swinging his scythe at first, but some idle thoughts quickly clouded his mind.

I have to do Heavenly Surge with all seven Divas, huh...? Heavenly Surge... I already did it with Sharon, so there are only six left...

The scene when he performed Heavenly Surge with Sharon played vividly in his mind, making the young king's face bright red in a matter of seconds.

I have to do that six more times...

"Arghhhh!"

He swung the scythe with all his might in an attempt to hide his embarrassment. Finishing his basic exercise also helped to clear his mind.

"Fuuu... But I won't get anywhere if I don't do anything, will I...?"

He couldn’t completely trust Lilicia, but his gut told him that something was brewing, something that could swallow the entire continent. For someone who couldn’t even save his own country, thinking that he could shoulder the fate of the world would be nothing short of impudent, but he was still doing everything in his power to fend off the dangers lurking in the shadows.



“I-I don’t particularly want to do lewd things with them, but I have to make sure that Lilicia is telling the truth somehow...”

“What, taking a break already? Don’t be such a pushover.”

A sharp voice answered his excuse. It was Sharon.

“H-Hey, Sharon. It’s rare to see you so early...”

“Y-Yeah, I just happened to wake up early today.”

The pair bashfully greeted one another, each holding their signature weapon. It had been a few days since they performed Heavenly Surge, but the atmosphere between the two hadn’t improved in the slightest. Both of them knew they were overreacting, but they couldn’t do anything about it.

“A-Al, have you gotten used to the scythe yet? I-I could help you out if you want...”

They may have known that they were in the wrong, but a person’s feelings don’t change so easily. Despite that, however, Sharon was visibly happy to offer her help. At least, judging from half of her face she wasn’t hiding in embarrassment.

“U-Umm... Could you?”

Al answered, sporting a similar thousand-yard stare.

“Okay, in that case... prepare yourself!”

She fixed her grip on her sword. Her previous bashful expression had all but vanished. No wonder she was called the Diva of the Sword; her stance left nothing to be desired.

“Please be gentle.”

Al grabbed the handle of his scythe as well and took up a fighting stance.

“...”

Their intense staring contest ended abruptly as both of them averted their gazes.

What the hell am I doing!? How am I supposed to train while staring at the

ground!?

He figured his racing heart may have been due to his intense workout just moments ago, but Sharon was also staring at the ground with rosy cheeks.

“This is... so not me!”

She stared at Al, seemingly upset.

“Al, I’m not holding back. Prepare yourself!”

Sharon grabbed her sword and prepared to attack.

“Haaaaaaaaa!”

Only dancing dust remained to indicate Sharon’s position as she seemingly vanished into nothingness with her charge.

“Wha--!? Gh, rghhh!”

A moment later, she reappeared in front of Al, ready to strike. A loud clang! reassured him that he had somehow managed to stop the blade a hair’s breadth away from decapitating him.

“What the hell, are you serious--”

“Shut up and fight!”

Blushing, she took another swing.

“Wait, isn’t this your assassination play all over again!?”

“No, I just can’t think clearly if I don’t get my exercise.”

“Geez, how much of a handful can you be!?”

While turning a blind eye to his own contribution to the current situation, he inserted his own little commentary while frantically warding off Sharon’s relentless attacks. Of course, he knew that she was holding back; he’d have tasted dirt long ago if she weren’t.

“Hey, no slacking! Put your back into that defense!”

But holding back didn’t strip her of all her power. One misstep and her blade borderline rubbed his cheek. He knew it could never reach him, but his body stiffened up when he saw the rapidly swinging longsword.

“Don’t tense up! You have to be more flexible when taking a blow!”

She shot harsh criticism at him.

“You’ll have no time to practice during a battle!”

He stumbled every once in a while, but he was managing to take Sharon’s blows. Then, after getting used to Sharon’s attack patterns, he signaled the beginning of his counterattack.

“Now! Whoaaa!”

“That’s an opening!”

wham!

But he ate a crushing blow before he could do anything.

“Gahhh!”

Of course, the blade didn’t actually reach his body, but the pressure of the strike itself was enough to send him rolling through the field like a ball. After confirming that Al was down for the count, Sharon let out a proud huff and put on a smug grin.

“You still have ways to go.”

But when she walked up to Al, her smile vanished. It was rare for her to wear a serious expression, but this was one of those times.

“Anyway, what do you think?”

She asked the young king, who was trying to get up from the ground.

“Huh? About what?”

Sharon asking something completely out of left field; leaving Al speechless had become something of a running gag between the two. And as usual, he tilted his head in confusion.

“Y’know... about me, umm... About me having been a slave!”

She shut her eyes and stood firmly as if she’d made up her mind about something.

“Huh?”

I didn’t get anywhere with that… What in the world is she talking about!?

“Come on, say something!”

Sharon ground her teeth at Al, who had given up on trying to figure out the meaning behind her cryptic words.

“I’m a Diva, but I used to be a slave! It, umm... It wouldn’t be strange if you threw me in jail and enslaved me again!”

Pain was strewn across her face. She was correct, Al would have a diplomatic trump card against Freiya if he caught them lying by sending a slave over instead of a princess like they promised. But then Sharon would be despised by both countries, so he already had his answer.

“No way I’d do that. While you’ve been quite the handful, you helped me out a lot too... and throwing a former slave in jail would go against everything I stand for.”

He puffed out his chest after stating what was obvious to him.

“Uh-huh, I see...”

She must’ve expected it, as she wasn’t very surprised. Not only that, she even doubled down on the questions.

“Al... Are you going to be happy once you liberate the slaves?”

He has heard this question before. He was a fool back then, a naive king who knew nothing of the world. That may have still been the case, too, but Al wanted to believe he’d grown out of it,
o he gave his honest thoughts on the matter.

“I don’t know what’s right, or if it’d make me happy. What’s important is that I want to do it.”

“That you want to do it, huh...?”

Sharon looked at him, perplexed.

“Live your life as you see fit. If people are still willing to follow you, then you have the makings of a great leader.”

Long, long ago, the late king told him these words.

“So I’ll keep liberating slaves, but I’ve said goodbye to my reckless ways. I want to show them how to lead happy, fulfilling lives and build my country into a place where everyone can have a chance at freedom. We’re nowhere near achieving it just yet, but one day I’ll turn this country into a safe haven for the wretched.”

He completely opened up to Sharon.

“Don’t get stuck on meaningless details, do what you believe in. You have nothing to worry about, I’ll be there to carry that burden with you if you ever get stuck.”

“Hehe, how generous of you.”

She answered Al with a gentle smile.

“Yeah. You know, my dad always used to say, ‘If you get punched, punch back twice as hard, but if someone does you a favor, pay them back tenfold’.”

Al said, carried away by the situation.

“Really now? Then you owe me twenty favors in total, right?”

“Hey, why’d you add another one!? Huh? Are you okay?”

He meant to give a funny retort, but Sharon’s smile suddenly wiped off her face.

“Al. Do you know that I had another reason to come here besides assassinating you?”

Her sudden change of tone and powerful eyes would leave anyone frozen in place.

“You mentioned using my position before.”

“Yeah. I’ll use your country to smash that fool sitting on the Freiyan throne and save my friends who’ve fallen into slavery!”

Al couldn’t help but nearly let a chuckle slip after hearing that ridiculous declaration. He knew very well that they stood no chance against that superpower. But Sharon’s unwavering eyes wouldn’t allow such disrespect, and Al knew that. As he was standing there completely dumbstruck, Sharon put on a

gentle smile.

“Though your country will have to get stronger before we can do anything about that. And if you find that my plan goes against everything you stand for, feel free to throw me in jail!”

She casually challenged his ideals while still wearing the same gentle smile. Al was trying to choose his words carefully, but he gave up. There was no need to tiptoe around someone sharing her deepest feelings.

“Well, I already said I’ll carry that burden with you, and I’m not throwing you into jail.”

“What’s with that half-assed response!? At least tell me you’d sacrifice your life for my dream or something!”

She retorted with a rude remark, not unfamiliar to Al. But Al knew Sharon was just joking around as she playfully stole a glance at his face.

“Well, I think you should just keep doing what you’re doing.”

He said teasingly.
“Though if you keep eating this much, there’s no way you’ll fit into our cells--”

wham!

“Gahh!”

Sharon had seemed flustered, but Al’s crude remarks were still met with a full swing of her blade.

“Geez, you never know when to shut up, do you...? But thanks.”

Her last words didn’t reach Al’s ears, as he once again found himself tumbling on the ground.

“So, can I stay in the castle?”

She was looking at him intently, searching for confirmation.

“Ow, ow, ow... Of course you can! More importantly, is bashing someone with a longsword your way of showing gratitude?”

“Hehehe, yeah, it is, so don’t ‘Ow’ at me.”

“What does that mean!?”

Sharon completely ignored the raging king and nonchalantly walked over to him.

“Oh my, you’re covered in mud!”

“And whose fault might that be!?”

Sharon let out a hearty laugh.

“Go and clean yourself up before breakfast! You won’t survive our next training session if you dare to drip mud on my delicious meal, got it!?”

Why is the person that made me take a dive in the mud berating me now!?

“And...”

Oh, great, she’s not done yet.

“Now that we’re here, let me make something clear! Back then I... Umm... What happened doesn’t mean I love you! You were bawling your eyes out, so I had no choice; I was basically backed into a corner. I wanted to console you and it was a special one-time service from me! S-So don’t think of us as lovers or anything!”

She blurted it all out in one go. Al flashed a wry smile, feeling somewhat bad for Sharon.

“Don’t worry, I know. I’m really grateful you helped me protect my people and that’s all. The kiss didn’t count, and we’re not lovers. Are we on the same page?”

“No, I mean, you don’t have to deny it like you were falsely accused of murder...”

But you did the same, didn’t you? Why do you look so sad all of a sudden? What should I have said!?

He might’ve complained inside, but he wanted to put a smile on the girl’s face, so he tried talking his way out of it.

“Don’t worry... just think of it as something mundane, like confusing salt with sugar, and forget it. I’ll wipe it from my memory too.”

His body still faintly remembered that ecstatic feeling, but he believed it was an aftereffect of Heavenly Surge. Al was certain Sharon felt the same and would agree to his proposal.

“You... idiot!”

She couldn’t even produce a shout, berating Al in a thin, high-pitched voice. But even so, her words pierced his soul.

“Hey, why are you getting mad!? You should--”

“Shut up, you big dummy! Go take a bath already, you stink!”

He tried to fight the pain in his soul by talking to Sharon, but she pushed him toward the gate, cutting him off.

“All right, I’ll go and take a bath if that’s what you want! Geez...”

They wouldn’t be able to have a peaceful discussion like this, so he did what she asked.

“I’ll... never forget it.”

Staring at Al’s back, Sharon whispered to herself.

“Hm? Did you say something?”

“Nothing, you idiot!”

Al asked in response, but he was instantly shot down.

She’s beet red, she must be fuming.

Al didn’t want to anger her any more, so he reluctantly entered the castle despite feeling like he was missing something. Their exchange ended there, without either of them noticing the presence of the blue-haired girl watching over them...

The moment he entered the castle, he spotted Jamka, staring intently at a piece of paper.

“What are you doing?”

Al was planning to slip away before Jamka could complain to him, but Jamka’s eager stare forced him to start a discussion.

“Why are you holed up in this corner? Did someone chase you out or something?”

He was worried the staff would bully him for being a so-called “traitor”, but...

“Don’t say something so cruel the moment we meet! And you know that everyone was like, ‘Yeah, I don’t blame you. If I found out that the king I’ve been serving with everything I have is a spoiled brat and is now rumored to be the Demon King himself, I would want to run away too!’ Why would these people want to chase me away, huh!?”

He got told off. Al made a mental note to ask who exactly said that, while Jamka put on a friendly smile.

“Though, even if you sound like a pestering mother-in-law, I know you’re just worried about me. Sorry.”

But his gentle smile couldn’t fool Al. Jamka was obviously trying to hide the document he’d just been reading.

“Okay. Well, let me know if anything happens.”

Al acted like he didn’t see anything, and casually passed Jamka, but then...

“And just what the hell is this!?”

The moment he passed behind Jamka he snagged the document from him.

“Ah! Hey, wait, that’s... that’s not what it looks like! I got that from Lady Cecilia...”

Jamka tried to come up with an excuse on the spot.

“From my sister?”

Jamka rarely ever got flustered, so Al found him incredibly suspicious. He quickly went over the paper in his hands.

“A bill for allowing marriage between siblings, parents and children, and men and women of all ages!”

Al read the outrageous title.

“Haah... Geez, what the hell, Cecilia...?”

He felt his mind going numb as he let out an exhausted sigh.

“Anyway, I’ll give this to her myself. You have enough on your plate as it is, don’t get caught up in her wild ideas.”

“Y-You’re right, but I received this from her personally, so I should be the one to bring it back!”

Al couldn’t help but put on a wry smile upon witnessing Jamka’s absolute loyalty.

“It’s fine. Let me help you once in a while.”

“O-Okay, then... Thank you...”

Jamka walked away, seemingly dejected.

He was acting a lot like this when that happened...

Al recalled the events leading up to Jamka’s desertion. He quickly ran after his old friend, but...

“Haah, there goes Brusch’s wedding...”

He just barely caught that quiet, careful whisper. He stopped in his tracks.

“What a freaking joke!”

He aggressively ripped apart the document in his hand and headed to the grand bath.

“Haah, finally. Took a while to get here.”

Al still had time before breakfast, but for some reason, it bothered him how much time he had wasted on Jamka.

What should I do with him?

Rage building inside him, he threw open the doors to the grand bath.

“Good, at least it’s free.”

He peeked into the bath. The giant tub, able to fit twenty people, filled the room with thick, warm steam. He carefully examined the massive bath, about four times as large as Al’s own room,
but he couldn’t even see the tip of this nose through the thick steam.

“I’ve already dealt with our resident assassination maniac, so I think I can go in safely.”

Saying so, he wrapped a towel around his waist and entered the bath. He wanted to jump into the inviting bathtub immediately, but doing so covered in mud would be rather rude. He filled a bucket lying on the floor with water and poured it over his head.

“Ouch, ow...”

The warm water invaded a random scratch on his body.

“I couldn’t even launch a counterattack...”

Tracing the scratch with his finger, he sunk his body into the water. He closed his eyes and melted onto the bottom of the bathtub.

“Ahhh! This is what I’ve been waiting all day for!”

He clenched his fist in happiness. Althos was not a wealthy country by any means, but in other countries, not even the royalty could allow themselves to soak in so much warm water. But Althos was different. It was chosen as the resting place for the Demon King because of the immense magical energy coursing underground. That energy strengthened the seal, but it also provided numerous benefits for its residents. One of those benefits was the water. The magical energy purified the underground streams, allowing it to spring above ground as hot water, providing the residents access to hot water at any time.

“Haah~, is this what heaven feels like?”

He washed his face and aimlessly stared forward. But suddenly, he spotted an ominous shadow swimming on the surface of the water.

“I thought Sharon was done with this... Is this a new assassin?”

He stared intently at the shadow, raging inside about his quality time being ruined. Swaying on the surface, it was slowly approaching Al. Al carefully stood up and grabbed the only weapon within his reach: a wooden bucket. And then...

“Wha--!?”

He was speechless when he finally spotted the figure projecting the shadow. It was none other than Feena, wearing her birthday suit.

“Huh? F-Fee-- What? Why?”

Due to the sudden change from complete relaxation to a seemingly life-threatening situation, he lost the ability to form a coherent sentence.

“I can’t see a thing with all this steam. I totally can’t see her beautiful, clear skin slowly turning slightly reddish!”

He whispered as if praying to the gods. Averting his gaze didn’t even cross his mind given his stupor.

She’s buck naked!

Something began swelling in, or, to be more precise, on Al, proving that he was still a healthy young man.

“Ahh!”

Al quickly sunk himself into the water to hide his bulging manhood.

“Al, it’s rude to enter the bath with your towel wrapped around you.”

“And how isn’t it rude for us to take a bath at the same time, huh!?”

He quietly praised himself for conjuring up a retort in this situation.

“It’s normal for a married couple.”

But the blue-haired Diva wasn’t affected by it at all. On the contrary...

“Al, let me wash your back. Then I’ll wash your #$@& with my &#*@&$. I’ll even clean your %#&@$, so please...”

The moment she finished her unnecessarily detailed plan...

splash!

She was rather shaky when she made her way to Al, but she collapsed into the water. She sank down like a stone; only the bubbling water could be heard behind her.
One... two...

blub

Her pinkish back floated above the water, but the rest of her body was still with the fishes.

“Huh!? Hey! Are you okay? Stop fooling around or you’ll drown...”

He rushed over to Feena, but he suddenly stopped.

I can’t touch her like this.

If he touched Feena directly, she would be overtaken by lust--er, Heavenly Surge.

Wait, this could be my chance. If I don’t activate Heavenly Surge with all seven Divas, the Demon King will be released.

He repeated Lilicia’s words.

“With Feena taken care of right here... there’d be five left, huh?”

He contemplated, but Al still wasn’t certain he could trust Lilicia.

Oh, and we don’t have the scythe or her relic here...

Then he remembered that this was no time to ponder on such issues.

“Anyway, this isn’t right. I can throw my pride, along with my dream, into the trash if I do Heavenly Surge with an unconscious girl!”

Though now that I think about it, we’re both naked in a closed room… This is bad.

Not only was the situation with the drowning girl horrible, his slowly fading self-control worried him just as much.

“Crap... But I have to do something...”

Subdera’s Diva drowned in Althos’ bath. Even if that were true, no one would believe such a ridiculous statement. Al made up his mind, took the towel off his waist, and approach Feena...
all the while keeping his eyes shut. Then, the moment he tried to wrap the towel around her and pick her up--

splash!

Feena suddenly lifted her head out of the water. Al opened his eyes at the splashing sound, only to be met with her gorgeous, snow-white skin reflected by the warm bath water, along with her surprisingly modest mounds.

“Pwah! Al... you were so slow... I had to come... back up... I nearly drowned there...!”

What she saw was Al standing there like some sort of ancient statue in all his manly glory... or so he imagined. What he didn’t realize was that the girl’s head was right around the level of his waist, and her eyes were glued to a certain something of his. Her cheeks were getting more and more flushed by the second.

“How assertive of you... But don’t you think it’s a bit too soon?”

Feena must’ve been embarrassed; she was fidgeting and covering her eyes with her hands.
Al didn’t have time to worry about that, though.

“No, wait! I wanted to save--”

He quickly denied the most heinous accusation, but...

“Al, did you want to tie my hands together with that towel and turn me into your plaything?”

“No, what!? If I touched you directly, you’d be overtaken by lust, remember?”

“You’re so into me that you want to do Heavenly Surge... Thank you...”

Her delusions were getting out of control and her cheeks grew redder and redder, until she once again sank into the water.

“Blub!”

“Hey, Feena!”

He quickly grabbed Feena with the towel and dragged her out of the bath. He finally had time to let out a sigh of relief, but...

Bloodlust.

“Oh my, fancy finding you here. Let me wash your--”

“Ahh, Cecilia! What are--”

The bath door flung open, its sound reverberating through the room. Cecilia and Sharon entered the bath. He had no idea why they had shown up, but he couldn’t worry about that. The reason for their arrival was less than trivial. The

real problem was where they were looking.

“...” “...”

From their point of view, it may have looked like Al had attacked the completely naked Feena. No, not “may have”. It definitely looked like that.

“N-No, this is all a misunderstanding! I can explain--”

Just when he was about to begin his explanation, the blue-haired Diva regained consciousness.

“You’re so big... It was incredible...”

Even her deluded monologues were cornering him.

!!!

“Hey, don’t mumble something so incriminating!”

Then, she once again closed her eyes.

“Don’t faint on me when I need you! Tell them I’m innocent...”

“...”

But she was sleeping soundly, as if she had just crawled into her comfy bed after a delicious, warm meal on a cold winter’s night. And so, Al was left pondering how he could escape from the situation he was in.

“O-Oh my... Would you mind explaining what has happened?”

“You pig! How low can you get!?”

He was certain that Cecilia’s gaze was going to pierce his soul, while Sharon gave him his brand new, rather dishonorable title: “pig”.

“Fuuu... I’m begging you, if there’s someone out there, save me!”

He put his hands together and pleaded at the ceiling.

“A-Alnoa?”

Brusch energetically ran into Al’s office like she usually did, but the state of affairs seemingly shocked her to her core. Feena was sleeping on the bed in the corner of the room, which alone can’t be said to be out of the ordinary. However, Cecilia was sitting on the sofa, radiating a nearly palpable, vile,

poisonous aura from behind her unbreakable smile. Next to her was Sharon, whose expression was not for the faint of heart to see, and in front of them, the target of their deadly stares, was the supposed leader of the country, cowering in fear. Brusch was unable to comprehend what she was seeing. They wouldn't even look at her as she stepped foot into the room.

"I told you to go to the steamy bath, but I didn't mean that you should get steamy with Feena, did I?"

Sharon said assertively.

"But I didn't--"

"Oh my, I know, I know! You simply happened to get caught up in the moment! Isn't that right?"

Cecilia interrupted Al with something a mother would say in defense of her child that was caught shoplifting, all the while wearing her charming smile. Though the look in her eyes was more sinister than anything...

"Umm... Alnoa..."


ぐぬぬ…

Brusch said timidly in the tense atmosphere.

“I hope it’s something important; now is not the time for some temporary marriage candidate to interrupt us!”

Sharon lashed out at her.

“It’s not ‘temporary’! I’m a valid, strong candidate!”

But Brusch was not your run-of-the-mill energetic little girl. She took pride in being the head of the intelligence agency, and Alnoa’s marriage candidate, so she initiated an intense stare-off.

“Huhhh!?” “What did you say!?”

They were glaring at each other like rabid dogs, waiting for the signal to start the fight.

“So, why are you here?”

It seemed out of the question at first, but Sharon finally let up and asked her.

“I’m not telling! I’m Alnoa’s subordinate and marriage candidate, so I will give my report directly to him and no one else!”

But it seemed like Sharon’s previous remark struck a bad chord, as she turned away from her with a pout.

“What happened, Brusch?”

They weren’t getting anywhere like that, so Al decided to break the ice.

“Ah, yes, listen to this! Our soldiers that left to investigate the area surrounding Eshantel reported that a boat is planned to depart from Eshantel for the Empire in just a few days, and its filled to brim with prisoners of war.”

“Why did you wait to tell me something so critical!?”

“Her calling me ‘temporary’ is just as critical!”

Al simply tapped his temple upon hearing Brusch’s proud statement.

“Nhhh... So noisy...”

Feena, still in the bed, woke up.

I think... I was...

She turned around and buried her face in the pillow while trying to sort out the situation.

“Al’s smell... This is Al’s bed!”

But she got sidetracked with rubbing her face against the pillow.

“Umm, that’s kinda embarrassing, so could you stop?”

Then she spotted Al out of the corner of her eye, and instantly lifted her head from his pillow.

“...”

Stopped by Al himself in such a blissful moment, she pouted before moving on to assessing the situation.

“Wait... I was in the grand bath ready to ambush Al, then he... got the jump on me?”

She dropped that bombshell like it was nothing. Al could sense the stares piercing his body from behind him.

“I-I didn’t! Don’t make the situation worse on me! Wh-What now!? What’s with those puppy-dog eyes!?”

While trying to bear the burning stares directed at his back, he looked at Feena, desperately begging for some help. But Feena’s expression became gloomier than ever.

“Why won’t you listen to me?”

She said out of the blue.

“Wait, what? Does your stomach hurt or something?”

Feena’s expression as she was on the verge of tears wiped out the insufferable stares piercing Al’s back. He was worried that the girl was feeling seriously unwell after collapsing in the grand bath. Seeing genuine concern spread through Al’s face, Feena blushed and slowly started talking.

“Kanon is a good friend of mine, so I want to make sure that he and his people are okay with my own two eyes. But I’m currently staying here as your

bride candidate, so I can’t go out on my own whenever I want...”

Al tried to recall all the information he knew about Kanon. He was Eshantel’s Inquisitor and was rumored to take the place and power of the previous Diva, who had met a sudden death. He was also rumored to be quite a sight.

Why do they know each other!?

After revealing some rather unexpected information, she once again hid her face in Al’s pillow as if she were embarrassed by something, though it was unclear what exactly made her flustered. Al couldn’t fathom how she was able to slide into his bed and try to ambush him in the bath if she found his stare embarrassing now, but at least he understood why Feena opened up to him now.

“Why didn’t you start with that? Do I seem that uptight to you?”

Feena poked her head out of the pillow and shook it.

If she thinks I am then why would she approach this situation in such a roundabout way?

Al was trying to understand Feena’s train of thought, but...

“I’ve read that... it’s much easier to get what you want... after sex.”

After thinking for a bit, Feena mumbled her answer. She wasn’t wrong, but her ear-reddening answer felt like a knife piercing through Al’s heart.

Wait, am I jealous because she holds another man dear?

Al’s head was filled with all the instances she said he would become her puppet one day.

She was saying that from the moment we met. I’m a fool for thinking that she was simply being kind to me all this time...

Feena was silently looking at Al.

Yes... Everything’s been going according to her plan, but at the same time... I owe her.

He thought to himself before turning to Feena with a warm smile.

“You don’t have to beat around the bush like that after all the things you’ve

done for me. I'll gladly lend you a hand."

He said as cheerfully as he could to mask his inner thoughts.

"Al... Thank you."

She looked at Al as if he were her savior and strongly nodded.

"Hm? Did you say something?"

"Yes. Since you'll help me save Kanon and the people of Eshantel, I'm fine with continuing where we left off."

"Tell me, why are you trying to make this even harder on me?"

Just as Al retorted...

"Oh my, please don't get so ahead of yourself, Lesfina. And Al, I have something to discuss with you."

Cecilia grabbed Al's neck with a smile colder than the northernmost point of the Arctic.

"Cecilia, may I join you as well?"

Sharon grabbed Al's neck as well, wearing a similarly cold stare.

"Huh? What? Cecilia? Sharon? You know I didn't do anything, right? This has nothing to do-- Eh? Ehhh!?"

Devoid of any logic or sophism, the two girls carried the young king out of his room.

"Thank you, Al."

Feena, who usually rushed to Al's aid, now simply watched them leave, putting her hands together as if praying for his safety.

"Haah, this was horrible."

For the past hour, he'd been trapped between his overprotective sister and Sharon, the security guard who caught the naughty Al shoplifting. It may have only been an hour, but it felt like an eternity for him.

"Come on, they know I'm busy..."

The blue-haired Diva was looking at him from the corner of the corridor

leading to his office as he grumbled to himself.

“Oh, Feena. Are you okay?”

As always, she remained silent, but even so, she seemed genuinely happy for Al. Though in reality, someone wielding the power of the Valkyrie wouldn’t be out for long after getting dizzy in the bath. But even then, Al felt relieved to see her on her feet again. It would have been an issue if she were bedridden for days, as they had some things to discuss.

“Feena. According to Brusch, Eshantel’s war prisoners will be shipped to the Empire in a couple of days.”

He tried to be as clear and to-the-point as possible.

“What? Then we have to hurry.”

He raised his hand to calm her down.

“Yeah, we’re making the preparations already. It’ll take a bit until we can leave, but don’t worry.”

“Hmm? That’s rich, coming from you. You’d have blasted off in a moment’s notice just a few weeks ago.”

While Al was sharing his plan with Feena, Sharon cut in, walking up to them with a glower.

Has she been watching us this whole time?

“Of course I’ve grown over time! And I know all too well that I’d just cause everyone trouble by running off alone!”

He explained himself to Sharon and stared back. A moment later...

smoosh!

Al’s head was trapped between two incredibly smooth, elastic somethings, and he knew exactly what those somethings were.

“Oh my. Good job, my lovely little brother! You’re becoming a better king every single day, aren’t you now?”

Cecilia was forcing his head between her breasts.

“Pfwah! Gah!”

Unfortunately, he didn’t have the luxury to appreciate the comforting feeling or wonderful scent. Her previous scornful laughter disappeared at some point while she was holding Al’s head down
without any signs of letting up.

Oh, so Heavenly Surge won’t activate through breasts.

Feena thought, though she really didn’t have the time to ponder such things. Al slowly stopped struggling, and not because he gave himself up to the pleasure. His face, deep inside the valley, was probably beginning to turn purple.

“Cecilia, isn’t that enough? Al is going limp.”

“Oh my. Don’t worry, Al is a tough boy.”



“I mean, look at him; it doesn’t seem to amount to much.”

Sharon warned her, but Cecilia was already too far gone.

“Umm, Miss Cecilia, would you...”

Feena tried to hold out a helping hand when she saw the comedy routi-- er, tragedy unfolding before her eyes, but...

“Oh my. Don’t even try it, I’ll never give up on my special time with my little brother!”

Cecilia pushed it away.

“And...”

Cecilia triumphantly directed her eyes at a certain part of Feena. After a moment of silence...

“Someone has to comfort him like this since you can’t.”

She dealt the finishing blow.

“Kuhhh! I don’t care if you’re my sister-in-law, I’ll never forgive such humiliation!”

Feena quickly spread her legs and prepared to attack.

“Cecilia’s really scary when she’s like this.”

Sharon observed.

“Eeeep!”

Color drained from Cecilia’s face as she let out a shriek and loosened her hold on Al.

“O-Oh my, what are you talking about, d-dear Sharon? I-I’m not scary in the slightest, am I? Am I?”

She was desperately looking for confirmation from Al, who had just escaped a near-death experience, but...

“Hahaha... Hehehehe...”

Hearing the blue-haired girl’s ominous laughter made Cecilia freeze in place.

“Oh my. Wh-What is it, L-Lesfina?”

Despite the cold sweat running down her cheeks, she forced a smile. Perhaps due to the oxygen deprivation, Al seemed to notice a satisfied smile on Feena’s face.

“It’s nothing, Miss Cecilia.”

And Feena’s usual tone supported that theory, though she may have just stopped because Cecilia was obviously suffering.

“Anyway, stop fooling around. Let’s get ready to--”

“Alnoa! Terrible news! Eshantel’s Inquisitor has reportedly crossed the border along with two thousand of his soldiers!”

Seriously!? Why can’t anything go according to plan!?

He had hoped to at least catch his breath after the events that had transpired just a little while ago, but it seemed like his headache wouldn’t go away for the foreseeable future.

Ch.2 Eshantel's Inquisitor



“Hurry up! Eshantel is shaken after their crushing defeat, so grab only the bare minimum in terms of weaponry and put on your best war face!”

Jamka’s voice boomed through the training grounds, directing the confused troops in the warm spring sunshine. The soldiers were wearing their combat apparel, but there was no sign of the tension that would usually to fill the air before a battle. It was as if they were going out on an afternoon stroll in order to comfort the defeated Eshantel troops.

“I’ll go talk to them first, so you just stay here and watch.”

Jamka said as his right sleeve fluttered in the spring breeze.

“No, they reported sightings of the Inquisitor himself. This is now a diplomatic matter, so I should go first.”

Al smiled mischievously and mounted his horse. Of course, he’d left his scythe behind to prevent any unnecessary rumors. Jamka couldn’t do much but let out a heavy sigh and drop his shoulders.

“Haah, I knew this would happen... Okay, but I’m going with you, and we’re taking some troops--”

“I’ll be going, so there’s no need for that.”

“Oh my. I’ll join you as well.”

In the meantime, Sharon and Cecilia lined up next to Al, both with determined looks.

“I’ll be going too, of course.”

“Ahhh!”

Startled by the quiet whisper from behind, Jamka reflexively drew his sword.

“Oh, you dare to pull your sword on a guest of the state? This is now a diplomatic issue. Al, I’ll have you do everything I say unless you want an all-out war.”

“Wait, wouldn’t that damage your reputation too? Gah, whatever. I’ll do what you want as long as it’s not something too wild.”

What kind of Diva would try to blackmail me instead of simply asking!?

Al let out a defeated, tired sigh, while Feena nodded and ran up to Al's horse.

"Nhh!"

She turned toward Al and stretched her arms out.

"Would you like to get on my horse?"

Two silent, small, happy nods.

"Well, I don't think anything will happen. We're only going to welcome Eshantel's soldiers, after all."

Though he would be meeting the broken, mourning soldiers with two Divas at his side and a third on his very own horse. One could argue that Althos' king had gotten a bit ahead of himself
and only wanted to boast about the beautiful girls in his domain.

"Don't worry, I know Kanon very well. He would never think you're arrogant."

She knows him very well, huh...?

Without noticing Al's inner turmoil, Feena stretched her arms out again.

"What's her relationship with Kanon...?"

He whispered, but they didn't have the time to discuss it. It would have been rude to make Eshantel's army wait any longer.

"Oh my, how dare you ignore me and latch onto Al."

But Cecilia seemed to have more pressing matters at hand.

"How scary..."

"Gahh!"

Feena turned toward her and whispered. Al thought this matter would drag on for a bit, but...

"Rgh... I'll let it slide this once..."

"What!? She gave up already!?"

Al and Sharon said in unison at the unforeseen development.

"Come on, Al. Hurry up!"

Cecilia acted like nothing had happened while Feena was waiting to be picked up.

“A-Ah... Too late...”

Sharon was shaking due to missing her chance to object. The way her mouth was flapping made her look like a...

“You look like a goldfish. Congratulations, you’ve evolved from a gorilla to a fish!”

Feena casually finished Al’s thoughts.

“I have not! And why is a fish more advanced than a gorilla!?”

“A goldfish can’t talk or make a ruckus. I’d call that an improvement.”

“I’ll have to sit down and have a serious talk with you one day.”

Even though Sharon apparently wanted to talk, she grabbed her sword and eyed Feena from her horse.

“Wait, wait, wait. If we spend any more time here, the Eshantel delegate will give up and go home!”

Al rushed between the two girls.

“Tch. Fine.”

Sharon shot Al a sharp glare as if she had something more to say, but she just turned away and pouted.

Geez, why do I have to deal with all this right before facing Eshantel’s army and its leader?

Al looked at Feena, who’d been staring at him like a well-behaved puppy waiting to be picked up. Equipped with his trusty Special Anti-Heavenly Surge Gauntlets, more commonly referred to as ordinary white gloves, he reached out to Feena.

“I’ll listen to you for now, but promise me you won’t make a racket! He might be your friend, he’s still an esteemed guest who came to us for help!”

He pulled her up. Of course, Feena was their guest as well, but that’s a different matter. It seemed like she hadn’t caught hypocrisy, as she happily sat

behind Al and wrapped her arms around his waist.

“All right, let’s go!”

Al was praying that their meeting would go without any issues or misunderstandings.

But his prayers weren’t heard. Not because Sharon picked a fight, Feena launched a spell, or Cecilia used Bind with her usual, abusive wording, it was simply because Eshantel wasn’t in need of help or looking to form an alliance. After learning what Eshantel truly wanted, they went back to the castle and gathered three hundred troops, along with Jamka, to once again meet Eshantel’s army at the northwestern border.

“Halt!”

After sighting the opposing army, Jamka gave his order.

“All right, we’ll be leaving. I’m counting on you, Jamka.”

Al casually said goodbye and waved to his friend. Jamka furrowed his brow and opened his mouth,

“Take care!”

but decided to leave it at that. With three Divas, each able to take on a thousand soldiers, they should be relatively safe.

“Yeah, don’t worry. You three make sure to do as I say too.”

Of course, he didn’t forget to warn the three girls not to start any unnecessary brawls.

“Oh my. Don’t worry, I won’t move a finger as long as you remain unharmed.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know. I’m staying back unless they attack first.”

“It’s a wife’s duty to listen to her puppet’s orders.”

I have a bad feeling about this… But I don’t think any of them would agree to watch from the sidelines.

That alone proved that they weren’t really obeying him, but Al decided to let it slide. In the meantime, they had galloped closer to Eshantel’s army.

“So that’s Eshantel’s army. They’re few in number, but they’re still said to be the strongest army on the continent.”

Al whispered from on top of his horse. Eshantel was Althos’ neighbor to the northwest. It was surrounded by tall mountains from north and east, the sea from the west, and a deep forest covered in thick fog from the south. It was an unreachable part of the continent. Because of their extreme seclusion, they had developed their own, unique culture. They called their soldiers “warriors”. Instead of traditional broadswords, they were equipped with slender, curved, single-edged katanas, and their armor wasn’t the usual boorish steel variety, either. They decorated their equipment with various cloths and thick, colorful strings. Seeing the army from afar, their decorated armor was both overbearing and gorgeous.

“Wow, how pretty.”

It seemed like both the Diva of the Sword herself and Al shared the same opinion as they stared at the army in front of them.

“They’re wearing such extravagant armor to make sure their lord, their Inquisitor, sees their prowess on the battlefield. Their armor also serves as their burial clothes. Kanon once said that a warrior’s last moment should be filled with splendor as they offer their lives to the Inquisitor.”

Feena whispered from behind Al. She seemed to be in a good mood, probably thanks to her friend’s wellbeing.

“Say, what kind of person is that Inquisitor?”

Al asked the girl behind him. He was incredibly curious. After all, the Inquisitor was Feena’s friend.

“He’s a gentle and energetic man, the same age as me. We met in a brawl two years ago, which served to decide his spouse.”

A brawl? Doesn’t she mean a ball? What in the world was she doing before coming here?

Al was thoroughly confused.

“So, did you win?”

Logically speaking, she'd only be here now if she'd lost, but Al couldn't help asking.

"I lost, but that arena was made for close-quarters combat. It was not a fair fight for a spellcaster such as I."

It seemed like that day still haunted her, though it was unclear if her anger stemmed from her loss or from not becoming Kanon's spouse.

"But Kanon is Eshantel's strongest warrior. He was trained by his father, and I might have lost regardless."

Feena sounded happy about recalling her memories of her good friend, but Al was getting more and more uneasy.

"And Kanon... maybe..."

"Huh, really? What's that blade on his back? It seems really fragile; is that what all their warriors use?"

Completely blind to Al's struggles, Sharon interrupted Feena with a tone that radiated pure curiosity. Maybe she just wanted to say something, but it was a rare occurrence regardless.

"That's called a katana. The blade is hammered countless times to make it slender and flexible, then it's polished and sharpened. Kanon once showed me that he could split a huge rock in half with a single slash. He called it Iai, which I later read is the art of drawing one's sword, cutting down the opponent, and sheathing it."

Feena answered Sharon to the best of her ability.

They can get along when they want to, huh?

Looking at the two girls chatting, he unintentionally squinted. But a moment later...

Hyuuuuuuuuuu!

Was that some sort of bird!?

"That's... Eshantel's battle cry!"

Just as Feena started her explanation, an arrow whistled by their ears and

struck the ground. A single horseman began galloping in front of the completely dumbfounded Al. The clanking of his armor overpowered the sound of his horse's hooves on the hard ground. Curiously, this horseman alone was wearing completely plain steel armor.

"You must be Althos' emissary."

Said the armored figure with a voice befitting a teenager.

"I know this voice... Kanon?"

Feena whispered from behind. It seemed that it was none other than Eshantel's Inquisitor, Kanon.

"That's right. I'm Althos' King, Alnoa. I have heard of the destruction that befell your country. We would offer to aid you in your recovery if you came for our help."

Al said in a friendly tone. He was hoping that the arrow was shot by a single warrior by mistake, on edge after a lost war. But instead of thanking him, the armor-clad figure only leaked bloodlust. His horse galloped even closer to Al while letting out loud neighs.

"Demon King Alnoa!"

Kanon whispered something, but it didn't reach Al's ears over the sound of the horse. Even though it was perfect spring weather, Al could feel chills running down on his spine and a cold sweat running down his cheeks.

I've felt this once before…

Unfortunately, he didn't have the time to shuffle through his memory. He once again raised his voice to try to talk it out with Kanon.

"We don't want to fight. First--"

"Shut up! I don't want to hear a word from the Demon King!"

Kanon's voice boomed through the field as he slowly approached the young king.

Isn't he supposed to be a kind person?

He could feel the bloodlust spewing from the depths of Kanon's helmet.

“Freiya’s Diva and Feena... You weren’t satisfied with turning Freiya’s and Subdera’s Divas into your playthings, so now you turned towards Eshantel... But know this: I won’t give in so easily, Demon King!”

Kanon drew his sword and thrust it toward Al. Al already knew what was going on. A simple, innocent misunderstanding. He considered telling Kanon that he was the one who usually ended up as their plaything, but that’d probably just make matters worse.

“Kanon, you seem to be misunderstanding something! Let’s leave our weapons and armor behind and have a talk!”

Al shouted, but...

“You won’t fool me, Demon King! I know you can impregnate women just by looking into their eyes!”

What sort of rumors am I getting caught up in!?

Just as he was beginning to sink into despair...

“I’ll have our little baby in here...”

“Why are you latching onto these rumors!? Hey, get your hands off your stomach!”

He turned around and scoffed at Feena.

“Oh my, you’re right. This rumor is just... Urgh. I feel like throwing up.”

“Cecilia... Are you getting sick? Is it morning already!?”

“Cecilia! I know you’re joking, but stop!”

“You’re disgusting! You savage!”

“Calm down, Sharon! Don’t believe all this! Wait, put that sword down!”

With a single sentence, the group had fallen into chaos--no, into complete mayhem. It was information manipulation on a whole new level.

“A-Anyway, let’s just talk, okay?”

“No! I didn’t come to talk! I came here to defeat you!”

It seemed like the farce was over, as Kanon stared right into Al’s eyes, his

bloodlust raging within him. Yes, right into his eyes.

“Ehh!? Wait, I’ll--”

He began galloping in... Al’s general direction. Feena let a quiet sigh slip upon seeing Kanon’s unpredictable actions.

“Kanon is unbelievably pure and naive, so I think he looked away because he doesn’t want to get pregnant.”

“But he’s a dude!”

For starters, what kind of Demon King could impregnate people with their gaze? Kanon didn’t even stop to think about that; he stayed his course at full speed. Once Kanon got close enough… he quickly strafed his horse right into Al!

wham!

Al tried moving out of the way, but he was too late. Kanon’s horse slammed into his own.

“What? Whoaaa!?”

The force of the impact threw both of them off their horses, and they landed right on top of each other.

“Grahhh!”

Pinned under the armored Inquisitor, Al croaked in pain.

“Al, don’t cheat on me!”

“Is that what this looks like to you!? We’re both guys, you know!”

Feena hurriedly got off her horse while voicing her concerns. She was certainly quite the bride candidate, but Al had to focus on the current situation instead of Feena’s delusions. Feeling an armor-clad man’s breath on his cheeks wouldn’t even amount to the S in “seductive” unless Al went dangerously close to crossing a border he wasn’t ready to cross.

“Prince--no, Inquisitor Kanon... Could we calm down and settle this with a talk?”

Al somehow squeezed some words out despite his body literally being squeezed to death by the armored man on top of him. Kanon’s orchid eyes met

Al’s gaze. Then,

“A-Augh! You’re a man!”

“Huh!? But so are--”

bam!

Kanon headbutted him mid-sentence. Al could practically feel his brain shake inside his skull
as his head plummeted into the ground.

“Hm? I’ve seen this attack before...”

He thought before the pain got the better of him.

“Oh man, that was close. I nearly got pregnant!”

Kanon hopped off the ground as if his armor were made of paper and jumped away from the crouching Al, who was hugging his head in immense pain.

“Ow, ow, ow... I bet you feel oh so high and mighty because I screwed up!”

Al shouted some less than diplomatic insults as he got himself up.

“That’s right! Now it’s time to get back the people you kidnapped!”

Not only would Kanon not listen to Al, but he also boasted some grave misunderstandings.
He probably had his eyes shut as he shouted at Al, facing the complete opposite direction.

But why is this happening in the first place? We’ve rarely ever encountered Eshantel, but they’re hostile toward us and seem to believe that I attacked their country as the Demon King...

He could only think of one possible explanation.

The Empire!

“Kanon, wait. Listen to Al.”

He snapped back to reality when he heard a familiar voice. Feena was now standing between Al and Kanon.

“Feena? Is that really you?”

When Kanon caught a glimpse of Feena, his bloodlust disappeared for an instant, but...

“Yes, it’s me, so please calm down and listen to Al.”

As Feena stepped closer with her arms spread, covering Al, Kanon’s bloodlust returned in full force.

“Kanon...?”

Feena called out to him in a shaky voice.

“No, Feena. You fell victim to the Demon King’s brainwashing. I can’t listen to you now.”

Kanon grabbed the hilt of his sword.

“Feena!”

He ran toward Feena, but it didn’t seem like he would make it. Kanon launched himself forward, closing the distance between him and the girl in an instant.

“Don’t worry, he will use the back of his sword.”

“Kanon...?”

She must’ve had the utmost faith in him. She just stood there, completely defenseless without her wand.

“Sorry...”

The blade sparkled for a second before...

clang!

The sound of metal striking metal and the delayed whirlwind-like impact filled the battlefield.

“What the-- Whoa!”

A curtain of dust enveloped them, interrupting Al. He couldn’t fathom what had just transpired. As the dust slowly settled, their figures finally became visible.

“Hey... I thought you were Feena’s friend. That attack could’ve easily killed

her.”

Sharon stood in the middle of the dust, protecting Feena with her broadsword, along with Kanon, shooting a sharp gaze at them, his sword swaying but still holding strong against Sharon’s power.

“Someone told me that your brainwashed subordinates are protected by an evil power, so I don’t need to hold back. Moreover, I couldn’t even scratch Feena with a puny attack like this.”

“You’re right. She’s as cunning as a fox, so she may have escaped unscathed. That gloomy face and conveniently wordless act only hide a silent killer...”

Sharon firmly grabbed her sword.

“Sharon, whose side are you on again?”

But Sharon completely ignored Feena’s remark and stared at Kanon with a forced smile.

“But more than anything, she’s my greatest rival! I won’t ever let a sneak attack take her down!”

“Sharon...”

Feena whispered. Sharon was itching with curiosity about Feena’s expression, but...

“First, I’ll beat him till he cries and make him beg for your forgiveness!”

Sharon swung her sword upward, accompanied by a huge roar. Her opponent launched high into the sky, cutting through the wind. Despite the audible crash, Kanon landed safely on the ground.

“Ahahaha, how impressive! This armor weighs over two hundred kilos, but that’s child’s play for a Diva, after all! As a side note, my weight is top secret!”

He said in a mocking voice as if he was just playing around, but...

“I guess it’s time to start getting serious.”

Contrasting his happy voice, he meticulously sheathed his sword and… vanished into thin air.

“There!”

clang!

Sharon swung down at a seemingly random spot, but Kanon suddenly appeared at the end of her sword. His drawn katana took Sharon's swing.

"Ahaha, impressive! Now..."

Kanon spun his body around, drifting his katana along Sharon's sword.

"Hahh!"

Using the centrifugal force to his advantage, he kicked Sharon in the stomach.

"Kyah!"

Sharon suddenly flew backward.

"I forgot to mention this, but don't think this sword is my only weapon."

He said teasingly.

"Hah. I thought you were some sword maniac, so I wanted to play along with your game..."

She swayed as she got up off the ground, but her eyes were filled with fire and determination, like a wild wolf hunting its prey.

"But in that case, I won't hold back either!"

Sharon fixed her grip on her sword and shattered the earth. Not metaphorically, however. She quite literally gouged out the ground in front of her.

"Your weapon is all about cutting, but it has nothing on this much rubble! I hope you like being buried alive!"

Sharon realized his weak point after exchanging only a couple of blows. She had him in checkmate. Or so she'd hoped.

"I'd like to congratulate you, but my sword isn't just some measly knife!"

He said as he lowered his center of gravity, pulled his sword back as much as possible with his right hand, and thrust his left hand forward.

"Haaaaaaaaaa!"

He stabbed his sword into the giant lump of earth with all his might. Al heard

a loud bam, and in the next moment… Kanon scattered the giant lump with his sword,
and returned it to its sender.

“Wait, it’s coming this way!”

As Al tried to flee, he spotted Feena, completely frozen in place.

“Ahhh, what now!?”

In a complete panic, he ran up to Feena.

“Cecilia! Tell Jamka to fall back! We’ll find a way to deal with this!”

“Oh my. Be careful!”

He found some solace in his sister’s unwavering smile despite such mayhem, but...

“We don’t have time, Feena! Fall back!”

“...”

She completely ignored Al’s desperate cries. There was no way to escape the huge lumps of earth flying at them.

“Shit!”

Cursing like no royalty ever should, he blasted off toward the incoming boulders to cover Feena.
But then...

“Burst.”

Sand began dancing around her, forming a circle before violently bursting outward. That sand explosion sent the incoming boulders flying...

“Aghhhh!”

Along with Al, who’d been on his way to do something about the incoming danger.

“Hm? Al, are you okay?”

Feena turned around as if nothing had happened and helped Al out from under the rubble.

Right, even if she’s careless, she’s still a Diva.

He started to regret rushing in to help as he was spitting sand out of his mouth.

“You thought something incredibly rude just now, didn’t you, Al.”

“No, not really. Either way, if we don’t stop those two soon, they’ll transform the entire area into their playground.”

He tried to change the topic.

“You’re right...”

Maybe Al’s serious expression changed her mind, as she once again looked at the dueling pair, and...

“Stars in the infinite sky, heed my call...”

She began chanting a spell.

Wait, Feena’s chanting!? This can’t be good.

“Feena? You can cast spells without any sort of chant, right?”

Al looked at her anxiously.

Please tell me she isn’t doing what I think she’s doing.

Al was praying to any and every deity he could think of. Feena stopped her chant and turned around.

“Yes, but I still need a chant for a spell strong enough to stop those two.”

She went back to her chant after finishing her explanation. Upon realizing that the word star was coming up more and more often, Al was mortified.

“Hey, Feena. Are you honestly trying to cast Meteor Fall?”

Al was hoping he wouldn’t be right, but Feena slowly nodded. His guess was right on the mark.

“Stop! Stop with the chanting! If you let that spell loose, this whole area will be turned to ash!”

“It’s okay. That’ll happen anyway if those two keep going at it.”

She wasn't wrong about that.

"And I'll only summon a small meteor. One that'll affect a five-kilometer area."

"Oh, that's a relief. The only problem is that I and all of our troops are included in those five kilometers!"

"Ah!"

"Don't 'Ah!' me! What were you thinking!?"

"Then are you going to stand here and watch them go wild?"

Silencing Al's retort, Feena drew his attention from her own failure to the two that created the ruckus. Al rubbed his temples in frustration and let out a deep sigh.

"Haah... Fine, I'll go."

He turned to face the ongoing duel. All he could see in the curtain of sand was two shadows clash for a moment, accompanied by a metallic clang, before they separated an instant later, kicking up even more sand.

What in the world is going on in there?

He cautiously began walking toward them.

It's okay, I'm protected by the seal. I'll survive as long as I can defend against Kanon's attacks... I think...

He took a big gulp before heading into the heart of the battlefield.

"Stop, you two! Let's put the swords down and have a talk!"

But a moment later...

"Hahhh!" "Ahhhhhhh!"

Al had unknowingly become the next clashing point for the two figures.

"Gahhh! Ughhh!"

Two muffled screams rang out, followed later by a third one from Al. The impenetrable dust wall hid the outcome of the attack from the onlookers. Everyone expected his abdomen to have been pierced by Sharon's sword from

the left and Kanon's katana from the right. But thanks to the seal, both swords were repelled, and the attackers were blown back by the recoil.

"Huh? Why?"

Kanon couldn't fathom why his blade hadn't reached Al.

"The Demon King can repel relics, huh? What an otherworldly power."

Dumbfounded, Al didn't hear Kanon's mumbling; his eyes were glued to the armor-clad figure.

"Are you a Diva?"

Al believed Kanon was a man. He was staring at him, praying for an explanation.

"You don't even know anything about your neighbors, Demon King? I'm the first man on the continent to use a relic!"

"I'd heard you could match a Diva blow for blow, but I didn't think you'd be using a relic."

He wanted to know how--and why--this was possible, but at the same time, he realized something else, something far more crucial.

Wait, does this mean I have to do Heavenly Surge with a man!?

"Al, get out of the way! We've just finished warming up!"

Sharon snapped him out of his inappropriate train of thought. But it seemed like she was completely lost, swallowed up by the fight to the point that she'd forgotten the reason they were at each other's throats in the first place.

"She's right. You're an eyesore."

Agreeing with Sharon, Kanon's cheerful voice was full of authority...

shudder

Al felt the chills getting to him again. They couldn't see each other because of all the dust, but chills ran down his spine regardless...

"It's like... the door to the seal?"

The door's image suddenly popped into his head. For some reason, Kanon's

voice reminded him of that place.

“Not going to move? Then die!”

Kanon’s cheerful voice boomed through the devastated battlefield. It seemed like they wouldn’t get to sit down and talk anytime soon.

“Let’s put the swords down for now! If you continue, our armies will get tangled up in this too!”

“My... people...”

With that, Kanon’s bloodlust faded slightly. At that moment...

“Now’s my chance!”

Sharon blade swept in from the side, aiming for Kanon while completely disregarding the fact that Al was in its way.

“Ughh!” “Ahh!”

Al was instantly blown away, and Kanon, who’d had his guard down, met the same fate.

whaaaaam

“Sharon, you--! Why the hell did you attack him while I was in between you two!?”

Al cried out in pain, but...

“What’s the big deal? It’s not like I can kill you.”

Sharon just shrugged it off.

I swear, I’ll make her regret this.

But to do that, Al first had to get up from the ground. He put his hands on the ground to help himself up, but... one of them landed on something much softer than the ground.

Haah, am I seriously doing something so cliché with a guy!?

While cursing at the one-trick pony deity laughing at his misfortune, he got up. The armor-clad Kanon was still lying on the ground, but Al could see a little bit of his white skin peeking out from under the armor. It was one of his snow-

white shoulders, its complexion unlike anything Al had ever seen on a man. Al was holding it in his hand.

“Thank goodness. I expected to become part of a much crueler game.”

Just as he was about to let out a sigh of relief...

“Kyahhh!”

Huh? Who was that?

An unusually arousing voice spread throughout the battlefield. Al immediately snapped out of his relieved state of mind, as that scream came from none other than the person behind steel helmet under him.

“Gah... Kill him for showing you such disgrace! You hear me? Put that pervert down!”

“Disgrace? We’re both men! What am I supposed to do!?”

Just as Kanon looked away...

“Support the Inquisitor! Fire your bows!”

Countless arrows launched from Eshantel’s army, accompanied by the warriors’ battle cry.

“Geez, what the hell is going on!?”

Al reflexively began rolling on the ground, trying to gain as much distance from Kanon as possible. His efforts were for naught, however, as he spotted two horsemen charging toward them. The two horsemen were holding a firm net between them.

“Gah. They want to catch me alive?”

Al stood up and drew the sword at his waist in order to protect himself from the approaching danger.

“...Huh?”

“Tch. We’ve lost... We’ll stand down for today.”

Kanon tossed out that remark as the horsemen left with him in tow, his armor clanking as he bounced on the ground from inside the net.

“What in the world...?”

As Al watched the unbelievable scene unfold, a red-haired figure approached him from behind.

“Hey, what other slimy tactics you have up your sleeve to drive the enemy away, huh!?”

It was Sharon, and she wasn’t happy at all. She wanted to lash out after what happened on the ground, and with good reason, but Al felt like he was being falsely accused here.

“N-Nothing happened! I didn’t do anything inappropriate! And he’s a guy, too; I just touched his shoulder!”

He was trying his best to explain himself, but...

“That’s not the reaction you have when someone touches your shoulder! He seemed... y’know... turned on... Wait, are you playing for both teams!?”

“No! I’ll never ever activate Heavenly Surge with a guy! Look, I’ve even been wearing my gloves!”

Al stared back at Sharon, his mind set on clearing up their misunderstanding.

“Hmm, so you have... Well, let’s leave it at that for now.”

It was unclear if Al had managed to persuade her or if she’d just gotten bored, but whatever the case, Sharon moved on, preparing to leaving. He spotted the blue-haired Diva from the corner of his eye. She’d been silent ever since Kanon and his army had left. Al didn’t have time to think about it during the battle, but she was just attacked by her friend.

“Well, I know that feeling...”

As he recalled the image of his one-armed friend, Al slowly walked up to Feena.



“Say, Feena. When I was feeling betrayed, you told me something, remember? You said that Jamka must’ve had his reasons. I think the same can be said for Kanon.”

He gently put his hands on Feena’s shoulders.

“Al...”

She put her hands on Al’s without turning around.

“Cecilia is the one who said that.”

“Huh...?”

Talk about a screw-up.

“Ah, no, umm... Well...”

Al completely lost his composure. He wished the ground would swallow him up.

“But... thanks.”

Al felt his earlobes heat up at Feena’s tiny whisper, so he turned around, left wondering how effective his encouragement really was.

“Yeah... Thank you too.”

He somehow managed to squeeze those words out.

“All right, Eshantel’s retreated, so we should pack up and head home too!”

After gently slipping his hands off Feena’s shoulders, Al started walking back to his people.

Ch.3 Private Journey



The day after the battle, Al summoned his military commander to discuss their strategy for the impending clash. Al was sitting on the sofa, wedged between Sharon and Feena. For the record, he did not invite them. In front of them sat Jamka, completely alone, on a similar sofa.

“You damn Adonis!”

Al decided to ignore his friend’s pained murmur. In a corner of the room, grumbling and cussing, Cecilia was busy preparing her beloved tea. After their retreat, Eshantel established a camp in the woods near the border. In order to clear up the misunderstandings, Al sent a letter with a messenger, but they got no response. As such, they’d gathered to discuss what should be done, but right before they could get into it, Brusch threw the door open.

“Alnoa! We have a huge problem!”

She was bursting with energy as usual, but her expression was grim.

“Brusch, what happened!? What’s the rush?”

“The Empire joined up with Eshantel!”

“I see...”

Jamka said under his breath. They all had probably expected this--

“What!? Why!? What does the Empire have to do with anything!?”

Except for Sharon.

“Well, I expected that the Empire would show up sooner or later. It was clear from the moment Kanon called me ‘Demon King’.”

The Empire spread the rumors about him in the first place, so Al figured that they were the ones pulling the strings this time as well. He crossed his arms and tried to evaluate the situation.

“Brusch, how many soldiers did the Empire bring?”

“Fifteen hundred cavalry and three thousand infantry.”

“So their combined force is around fifty-five hundred, huh...?”

That was quite the military force for seizing Althos, though they were aware

that Althos possessed three Divas.

“We’re still investigating the surrounding area, but as of now there are no signs of abominations, reinforcements, or guerrilla troops.”

Brusch continued as if reading Al’s mind. It proved that she was at the top of her game as head of the intelligence agency.

“I did so well! Pat my head!”

She was waiting for her well-deserved reward. It proved that deep down, she was an ordinary little girl.

“Oh my, you’re giving out headpats? Did you see how hard I worked on this tea?”

As Cecilia finished handing out the cookies and tea, she pushed Brusch aside and snuggled up next to Al.

“Wait, why do I have to pat you now!?”

Al was lamenting over his predicament, waiting for the next little bunny to snuggle up to him, but...

“Huh?”

...he was caught off guard when the little bunny in question didn’t move an inch.

“Are you okay, Feena?”

She seemed to have gotten better when they arrived back at the castle, but she was hanging her head with an expression that would make anyone depressed just by looking at it.

Did she take what Kanon did to heart?

He wanted to cheer her up, but at the same time, he really didn’t enjoy the situation. He was like a child, jealous of anyone who got along with their friends. He knew. He knew it was wrong, but Al couldn’t get it out of his head.

“Haah... Arghhhh!”

He scratched his head and roared in desperation. Of course, that little performance instantly made him the center of attention.

“Ah, umm... My shoulders are stiff, so...”

What kind of excuse is that!?

As he pretended to roll his head around to fix his “stiff shoulders”, his gaze met a concern-filled pair of blue eyes.

“Are you okay, Al?”

The girl he was worried about was worried about him!

“Look how stiff you are. It’s okay, let it all out.”

“Let what out!? No, actually don’t answer that! And stop stripping!”

At least their little comedy routine was back to normal.

“Anyway, are you okay, Feena?”

Al took a peek at Feena while trying to regain his composure. She looked as stoic as ever, but...

“Me? I’m always fine, I was just doing a little thinking.”

It seemed like she was back to normal. She looked straight into Al’s eyes as he finally fixed his posture.

“Al, I’ve been thinking... I’ll go help Eshantel’s citizens, then have them clear up the rumors about you.”

Feena came up with her solution.

“So, I’m sorry, but I’ll have to leave this place for a while. Would you let me?”

She was looking straight into Al’s eyes. Her wish was as pure as her sky-blue eyes.
He wanted to make her wish come true, but his heart was holding him back.

“He might say that I brainwashed his people the same way I brainwashed you.”

Maybe that’s why he said it so mockingly.

“That’s fine. I want to do what I can.”

Feena, however, made her goal crystal clear. Al closed his eyes and made up his mind.

“Okay. But I’m going with you.”

“Ehh!?”

Feena let out a surprised shriek.

“What? I wanted to go from the start. Having an ally as powerful as a thousand men means that I don’t have to weaken the country’s defenses for my little outing.”

He wasn’t lying, but the way he had to explain himself made it sound as though he was.
Just as he thought he’d finally found the solution...

“What are you thinking!? You’re the king! What do you think will happen when the people find out their king is out while we’re waiting to be sieged!?”

Jamka stood up and slammed his fist on the table while disagreeing with Al’s proposal.
He was completely right.

“Just let him go.”

Just as Al was about to explain himself to Jamka, an authoritative voice resounded through the room.
Sharon had been completely silent before, but she proudly gulped her tea down in one go.
A glance at her plate revealed that she’d finished her cookies.

Are you for real!? She didn’t say a word until now because she was too busy eating!?

But since she was being supportive, Al decided to let it slide. Just as he took his eyes off her plate--

“And...”

He looked at Sharon, expecting more support from her.

“And it’s not like him being with you would make much of a difference.”

Ouch! That actually hurt! I was expecting some help, but instead you broke my heart!

“But don’t worry; I’ll be going too! We can take on two thousand people that way!”

She continued with a brimming smile. Taking on “two thousand people” sounded a bit dumb, but Sharon’s earnest smile was such a rare sight that Al was drawn in without thinking about the way she phrased it.

“I-I’ll go with you, okay? I want to see Eshantel for myself...”

Embarrassed by Al’s stare, Sharon turned away with a pout. The team had finally come together. Or so he thought...

“No. You stay here, Sharon.”

But someone was against the idea.

“What, would I stink up your little trip with Al?”

Sharon’s previous smile was gone, replaced with a palpable bloodlust. Feena took that bloodlust in full, tilting her head.

“No. I need you to do something else.”

“Huh? You need me?”

Sharon stared at Feena, her eyes and mouth wide open. She was ready for a fight, but things took an unexpected turn. Al himself had already taken cover.

“Kanon is a master when it comes to close quarters combat, so...”

She had a point. Cecilia may have been a Diva, but she specialized in holy magic. Close quarters combat was not her forte.

“So?”

Sharon was trying her best to unravel what Feena was hinting at.

“Could you please stay here? There’s no one else who can do it.”

Feena pulled out her greatest weapon: her puppy-dog eyes.

“R-Really?”

Her strategy seemed to be working,
but...

“Yes. Only a rabid, ferocious, red gorilla can match Kanon’s strength.”

“Are you picking a fight with me?”

She instantly went from flushed to sharpening her teeth.

“No. I’m saying that you’re my honest, trustworthy rival.”

Feena said with a completely blank expression.

“Wha--!? What are you saying!? Tch... Okay, since you’re willing to go this far, I’ll let it slide.”

Sharon’s face turned beet red, to the point where she pushed Feena aside and left the room,
leaving everyone guessing what exactly she let slide.

“Thank you.”

It seemed like it would be just the two of them. They could finally begin their preparations and--

“Oh my. Could I go with you, Al? Pretty please?”

But first, they had to deal with another issue. At least, they thought they did.

“What are you saying, Miss Cecilia? Who will act as the supreme commander if you’re gone too? Sharon is our guest, and I’m no noble. To make matters worse, I betrayed the country once!”

Jamka stood in the way of Cecilia before she could reach Al. He also gave no chance for Brusch to offer her services, as he covered her mouth before she could say a word.

“Ughhh... But, but...”

She was switching her desperate gaze between Al and Jamka, but...

“Cecilia, please.”

Al shut her down with a single sentence.

“Aww... Fine...”

She’d finally given up.

“I’ll pack my things.”

After taking a glance at the gloomy Cecilia, Feena stood up and left the room.

“Oh! Who knows what will happen during our trip... I should pack some extra underwear!”

She stopped in the doorway for a second to share those thoughts.

The next morning, Al and Feena were ready to depart under the dim, barely lit sky. They put their lightly packed bags, filled with dozens of portions of food, two blankets, and a change of clothes, on their horses. Al had his scythe on his back, and Feena was equipped with her trusty wand.

“We’ll be back in a few days. Thanks for covering for me until then.”

They said goodbye to Cecilia as they mounted their horses. Those were not the words one would expect from the king of a country, but Al could allow himself to say such things because of his trust in Cecilia, Jamka, and Brusch. At least, Jamka hoped that was the case.

I don’t know how he can trust someone who betrayed him only a few days ago...

Jamka thought to himself as he stared at his missing arm.

Well, I’ll think of my lost arm as a sign of trust instead of some sort of punishment.

He grabbed his fluttering sleeve and gave a wry smile.

“Oh my. Lesfina, we forgot something.”

Cecilia passed by the sentimental Jamka and approached Feena.

“What? I already have Al.”

“Hey, could you not objectify me?”

Cecilia ignored their little exchange and stopped in front of Feena’s horse.

“Oh, we forgot to pray for your safety and success.”

“You’ll bless our journey?”

Despite the slight difference in nuance, Feena showed a delighted smile as Cecilia held her palms up. Looking at her solemn, pure form was enough to help everyone find a tiny bit of solace inside themselves.
But...

“I am a messenger of God. Those who swear an oath to me shall never bre--”

“Eh? Wait...”

Al was too late.

“If that stoic girl dares to make a move on my precious little brother, let her #$@&--wait, no. Let’s go with something simpler this time. Have her body completely bound, rendering her immobile for a set amount of time!”

“What do you mean, ‘something simpler’!? You know that Bind won’t activate unless the other party acknowledges it, don’t you!?”

Al was outraged that Cecilia held them up for this.

“Oh my. Don’t worry, this was Discharge, not Bind.

But all this did was worry Al even more. Despite that, Cecilia was all smiles.

“And why the hell are you shooting high-level spells all willy-nilly!?”

Al was in complete distress while Feena, the target of the spell herself, seemed as calm as ever.

“I can take it for a few seconds... I think.”

She said casually despite having every right to get mad.

“But now I can focus on the objective without getting sidetracked by my desires.”

Her small whisper went unheard by Al, but it was clear for all onlookers that she had steeled her heart in some way.

“That’s right, you should be fine as long as you keep your hands off of Al. I’ll cancel the spell once you get back.”

Cecilia said cheerfully. Feena still showed no signs of getting angry.

“Leave before anything else happens.”

Sharon, who had been completely silent, sent them off.

“I pray for your success.”

Jamka said his parting words.

I mean, they’re right, but does seeing us off really have to be so cold and careless?

Al decided to keep his concerns to himself.

“Yeah, we’re off.”

“Goodbye.”

Al began galloping with Feena in tow, feeling a bit defeated. They left on their journey after being pretty much thrown out of the castle.

It’s good that we left, but... What should we talk about!?

A few hours after their departure, Al fell into the same dilemma as he did during his date with Sharon. The sun had already climbed over the horizon and the birds were singing their morning melody. The two of them rode silently beneath the beautiful, clear sky. While he was with Sharon, he had known what she was passionate about (food), so he’d managed to pull through somehow, but...

What does Feena like?

He shuffled through his mind like a madman. They’d be spending the next few days together, but he had no idea how to strike up a conversation. Al realized how little he knew about Feena.
He didn’t know Feena’s favorite food or drink, or even what kind of clothes she liked. She ate everything put in front of her without complaint, and she rarely changed clothes. When she did, it was something that’d appeal to Al. Basically, she was a cosplayer.

What should I do...?

He stole a glance to his side. Feena was riding as stone-faced as ever, seemingly lost in her own little world.

slide...

Al had expected her to admire the clear sky above them when she leaned her head back, but unfortunately, her body followed suit. She slipped off her horse and hit the ground with a bam!

“Huhhh!? Feena!?”

He jumped off his horse and rushed over to her.

“What happened!? Are you okay!?”

Al wrapped his arms around her, when...

“Zzz... Zzz...”

“Wait, you’re asleep!?”

Al shouted, but there were no signs of Feena waking up anytime soon. That didn’t come as a surprise, though. After all, she slept through falling off her horse. Despite that grand fall, she didn’t seem to have suffered any injuries. Could it have been because she was a Diva?

Maybe she didn’t get much sleep because she couldn’t stop thinking about Kanon.

Al theorized. He felt like he’d caught a glimpse of Feena’s true emotions, which made it even more painful.

“Though she’s also helping us with this.”

While he tried to rationalize things with himself, Al stuck his scythe into his bag and put the sleeping girl on his back. Someone seeing this might mistake them for a father and daughter.

“Don’t worry, we’ll switch after a while.”

He said while patting his horse’s nape.

“Zzz...”

He started riding as quietly as possible in order to avoid waking the sleeping girl.

“...Hmm? Food?”

The fragrant smell of lunch cooking over an open fire whetted Feena’s appetite. Still half-asleep, she slowly sat up and looked around absentmindedly. While she was away in dreamland, the sun had climbed to its highest point and the gentle spring breeze had picked up.

“Where are we?”

“Oh, you’re up?”

A familiar voice answered the thoroughly confused girl.

“Al, where are we...? Who am I...?”

“We’re close to the border. You’re Subdera’s Diva, Lesfina.”

He smiled at Feena.

“Sorry, I just...”

Finally understanding what had happened, she cast her eyes downward. Al put his hand on the dejected Feena’s head.

“You couldn’t sleep because you were too worried about Kanon, right? I’m happy you care for him, but you can’t fight if you don’t get enough rest. Failing to save Eshantel’s people because of a lack of sleep would be tragic, wouldn’t it?”

He said in a soft voice, but his emotions were all over the place.

“Save... Ah! I forgot!”

He was too focused on the storm raging inside him to hear Feena’s quiet whisper.

Haah, what’s going on with me?

He took his hand off Feena’s head, turned around, and started walking.

“Eat up when it’s cooked so we can get going.”

He knew. He knew he was being unreasonable, but he couldn’t quell his emotions. He couldn’t even hold a conversation. They had lunch in complete silence and departed soon after.

“Al... Are you mad?”

Feena asked sometime after they had set out.

“No, I’m fine.”

He answered bluntly. Once again, he was back to self-loathing. They continued their journey like that--in complete silence. By the time they reached the thick forest that signaled the edge of the neutral zone, the sun had

retreated below the horizon.

“Let’s make a camp here for today.”

Al carefully checked the surrounding area. The nearby trees and bushes made perfect hiding spots, and there was a small river running not far from them. They could have advanced further if they had really wanted to, but setting up a camp seemed much more sensible.

“...”

Feena agreed to Al’s lonely whisper with a small nod.

Haah, why am I always like this?

Unable to so much as hold small talk with Feena, his jealousy toward Kanon only increased.
He knew he had brought the situation upon himself, and it made him question his ability as a king.

Dinner was no different, spent without saying a word. After that, he sent Feena to sleep as to save his dignity, reflecting on his feelings under the gleaming moonlight.

A new day, a new chance! I’ll cheer myself up and then we can mess around like we always do.

Just when he was thinking about that...

“Al...”

Feena suddenly called out to him. He was so deep in thought that he hadn’t even realized that Feena had slipped out of her sheets and was right next to him.

“Rawwr... I’ll bite you!”

Feena jumped on him without a hint of tension in her voice.

“Hm? What are you doing?”

He tried his best to keep calm while Feena wrapped around him with the blanket in her hands.
But...

“W-Wait, what are you wearing under those blankets!?”

Is she naked!?

He could feel a pair of modest bumps pressing against his back just as that thought entered his brain.

“I read that we should cuddle naked to keep ourselves warm on cold nights.”

“Yeah, if we’re stranded on a snowy mountain! And--”

Then, he realized something.

If this keeps up, Heavenly Surge will activate!

His mind was pulled back to reality as Feena’s snow-white arms wrapped around his waist. And he once again came to a stark realization: She didn’t have her relic with her.

“H-Hey, Feena, your waaaand!”

When Al turned around, their faces were only a few inches apart. He suddenly leaned back to avoid direct contact.

bam!

He hit the back of his head.

“Ow ow ow...”

While on the verge of tears and rubbing his head, a small figure in a blanket enveloped him.

“Al...”

“Bwah!”

He shrieked. That was the only natural reaction to an almost completely naked Feena climbing on top of him. The moonlight glistened on Feena’s back; Al could only see her silhouette unless he squinted his eyes, though he was hardly in any position to be worrying about his impaired vision.

“Al...”

Feena’s sweet breath tickled Al’s cheek as she took his hand and quickly pressed it against her chest.

“It’s a little... just a tiny bit smaller than Sharon’s or Cecilia’s, but...”

Just a little!?

That thought briefly crossed his mind, but he knew he couldn’t say it out loud.

“Now we’re even.”

Al tried to figure out exactly what Feena was referring to as she leaned closer with her eyes closed. His chance to activate Heavenly Surge had arrived. He looked around, trying to find his scythe and Feena’s wand. The scythe was within his reach, but the wand was a bit further.

I think I can reach it if I stretch out more...

As Feena’s face got closer and closer, he tried to reach out with his free hand.

Just a bit more...!

He stretched with all his might, when...

“Al... I can’t move.”

Feena slowly collapsed onto Al’s chest. Of course. Feena was under the effect of Cecilia’s Discharge.

“Geez, she’s always causing trouble for you, huh?”

It was a rather dangerous situation for him. In more ways than one.

I mean, I just wanted to activate Heavenly Surge! I didn’t want to do anything perverted!

Beneath the defenseless girl, he began explaining his rising pulse to some judge that only existed deep within his mind.

I can’t even imagine what’d happen if we... y’know, had a little bedroom rodeo, and God forbid we decided to get married.

The image of a crimson-haired Diva crossed his mind.

“Al...”

Feena’s gentle whisper snapped Al back to reality. Only her head was visible from under the blankets.

“What is it, Feena? Can you move again?”

She nodded.

Not only is she a Diva, but a princess as well. It wouldn't be strange for this to be her first time camping. Maybe she was too excited to fall asleep, and that's why...

Al thought, but...

"Sniff, sniff..."

"What are you doing?"

He looked at Feena, only to see her sniffing her blanket, hands, and shoulders before going back to her blanket.

"Uh, Feena? Are you okay?"

She may have gotten a slight fever from being outside half-naked.

"Sorry... I want to get some air."

She put her clothes back on, slipped out of the blanket, and slowly started walking deeper into the woods.

"Haah... Now what?"

Al considered calling it a day, but...

"Letting her wander through the woods without her wand might not end well."

He murmured to himself as he collected his scythe and the wand and followed after her.

"Ah!"

He found Feena at the riverbank. A completely normal, everyday river. However, seeing a girl bathing in that river was by no means a normal, everyday sight. Her wet blue hair sparkled under the dazzling moonlight as if it were filled with stars; her crystal-clear skin reflected the moonlight as if she herself were brimming with light. Time froze for Al. He was completely starstruck.

"Al?"

Feena instinctively covered herself. Her unusually embarrassed behavior

tugged at Al's heartstrings.

"Ah... Sorry..."

Al finally realized that he had been staring at the naked girl and quickly averted his gaze.

"You can stare at me all you want."

ba-bum

Al's heart couldn't take it anymore.

No, I just... Yeah! I'm doing this for the sake of the continent! We can't let the Demon King go on a rampage!

Driven by those thoughts, Al slowly began walking toward Feena. She just stared at him, covering herself without any place to run or hide.

"Al, do I smell?"

She asked out of the blue.

"Smell? No, why would you?"

He asked perplexedly.

"Thank goodness. You were wriggling so hard when I held you, I thought it was because I reeked of sweat. I wanted to rinse it off."

Feena said, relieved. He had certainly been wriggling, but that was only so he could reach her wand… Nonetheless, he appreciated how mindful she was. A second later, however...

Al was assaulted by a sudden, strong headache.

Do you really appreciate it?

A mysterious voice rang inside his head.

All this pampering and care, snuggling and enticing is to turn you into her puppet so she can save some random guy, is it not?

The voice was being projected directly into his brain.

Is this the Demon King? The seal is getting weaker!?

With a pained smile on his face, he tried to uncover the mystery.

I have to perform Heavenly Surge as soon as possible!

He instantly started acting on his instincts.

“Huh!? A-Al!? Ah!”

As if swatting away a persistent fly, Al shook off his gloves and grabbed Feena’s shoulders.

“Al... Be gentler...”

He wasn’t exactly an expert on this sort of thing, so he went in a bit too rough. She should’ve already been swimming in pleasure from Heavenly Surge, but her face said the exact opposite.
However, he had to push on.

“Don’t worry, we’ll be done in a minute. You want to save Kanon, don’t you?”

He said without thinking.

Wait, am I just blackmailing her now?

His last remaining splinters of consciousness were firing off warning signals, but Al ignored them.

“My headache’ll go away if we do Heavenly Surge. Plus, it’ll make it easy to save Kanon. You want that too, don’t you!?”

“Ahhh... Al, I...”

Her shaking voice didn’t reach Al’s ears,
because...

That’s strange. Heavenly Surge should’ve already activated, but nothing’s happening.

He had his gloves off, the scythe and relic were in their places, and Feena’s cheeks were getting flushed. But it was nothing like when he did it with Sharon.

Why!?

The answer came from Feena, in the form of a whisper.

“Al... I love you, but... This isn’t right. This is not what I want.”

Their feelings weren't intertwined.

"What are you saying!? You want to turn me into your puppet, don't you!? You want to use my power to save Kanon, don't you!? That's the only reason you'd try to get close to me, the Demon King incarnate!"

Completely panicked, he shook Feena's shoulders, hoping to get her to agree.

"No... No, no, no, no! That's not it at all!"

But she vehemently shook her head, denying his accusations at the top of her lungs.

"Al, I... love you."

Al's mind couldn't process what was happening.

"I originally came here for that, but... At some point, everything changed, and I don't know why. I read up on it and concluded that it was love at first sight."

Tears began streaming down Feena's cheeks.

"I love you... I love everything about you. I love when you're mad; I love when you're sulking; I love when you're sleeping; I love when you're smiling. I love you from the bottom of my heart! That's why I was trying to hold back until we saved Kanon, but just I couldn't. I was giddy with excitement just thinking about our trip together. So much so that I didn't get a wink of sleep last night."

Her usual, reserved self was nowhere to be found.

"You've already kissed Sharon. You've even groped her. When you're with me, you always look so worried, so focused. It's like you hate spending time with me."

He was so awestruck that he'd forgotten all about his headache. Of course he had. After all, this was the first time someone outside his family was so openly expressing their love for him.

What the hell am I doing? I accused her of using me, then forced her to...

Overcome with regret, Al was ready to shout all his pain away and run. But running away from the damage he caused wouldn't amount to an apology. He racked his brain, trying to decide on the best course of action. His interpersonal

skills were abysmal, but he was trying his best.

“Al...”

The timid blue-haired girl stood before him.

This is no time for words!

He tossed his scythe aside and hugged her tightly.

“Al?”

That tiny figure, that perplexed voice, that sweet scent...

“I’m so sorry, Feena. You’re always looking out for me, but I was only looking out for myself...”

Al hugged her tighter, paying close attention so as not to touch her body directly. He didn’t want to push Heavenly Surge even further. But curiously for him, even though he wasn’t directly touching her, Feena got redder and redder, until her whole body took on a light-pinkish hue.

“And don’t be, umm.... jealous of Kanon. It’s lame!”

“Jealous?”

“Yes. You’re like a little kid.”

Al felt his face getting hotter. He was embarrassed. He was ready to run off at a moment’s notice, but he wanted to answer Feena’s honest feelings with his own.

Why does she look up to me if I’m so childish?

Al couldn’t read her expression while hugging her.

“I’m so happy.”

She whispered.

“Ehh? What?”

He shrieked when he heard her words. But his desire to truly understand those words overpowered his embarrassment. Feena, happy that she could breathe freely again, looked up at Al.

“I said I’m happy. Someone who doesn’t care about me wouldn’t get jealous.”

The gentle smile on the usually stoic girl's face made Al's heart skip a beat.

"Ah, no... Y'know... You're a guest of the state and all... I have to keep you safe... and stuff..."

Al's cheeks were burning; he felt like his face would catch fire at any moment. Hearing Al's jumbled words, Feena let out a cute laugh.

"That's fine for now."

With that, she buried herself in Al's chest again.

"Achoo!"

Feena sneezed.

"Ah, sorry! Clothes! Cold! Sick!"

Speaking in some sort of caveman language, he left to get the trembling girl some clothes and pick up his gloves.

"Huh!? Are you okay, Feena!?"

But as soon as he let her go, she collapsed.

Crap, did she already catch a cold!? Or, wait, did Heavenly Surge take effect!?

As Al rushed over and picked her up, Feena's body sprung in his arms.

"I'm sorry... Cecilia's spell..."

"Ah! Ahh! Right, I totally forgot!"

What a disaster. The same thing happened just minutes ago, but he'd completely forgotten about it.

"Sorry, I hurt you again..."

Regret washed over Al as he gently laid Feena down on his shirt.

"Al..."

She grabbed him with her slightly cold, gentle hand.

"It's okay. I'm happy."

Even with her body completely numb, she managed to force a smile. Al desperately wanted to help her somehow.

“Ah, I know! Feena, wait here for a bit!”

He sprung up and excitedly looked around the area.

“There it is!”

He picked up his scythe.

“I wonder if the Demon King will hate me if he learns what I’m using his powers for.”

He whispered with a cheeky smile. With his scythe in hand, he made his way to the river.

“There!”

Black magic cut through the ground in front of him.

“Ooh, it turned out pretty well!”

The dust and pebbles settled to reveal a hole large enough to fit a person. When he saw it, Al celebrated silently and began digging with the handle of the scythe, as if trying to connect the river to the hole.

“I’m sure the Demon King never would’ve thought that his treasured artifact would be used for something like this.”

Al grumbled to himself as he continued to shovel, and before long, the hole was finally connected with the river. He nodded happily as water started to fill the hole.

“Now for the finishing touches... I think that should be fine.”

He once again scanned the area. His eyes finally caught something interesting, and he promptly began chanting a spell.

“Al, what are you doing?”

Feena, who was slowly recovering from Cecilia’s spell, sat up and stared at him.

“Just watch!”

He said cheerfully.

“Fireball!”

Al shot his spell at a small rock tumbling across the ground, while Feena looked at him as if he'd gone mad. Disregarding the confused girl's gaze, he picked up the heated rock with the blade of his scythe and dropped it into the water-filled hole. It sank into the water, accompanied by an audible fizzing sound. Feena still had no idea what he was doing, she merely watched him repeat the process until a playful cloud of steam appeared above the hole.

"Ah! Could this be--!?"

Finished with his preparations, Al checked the temperature with his hand.

"That's right, an impromptu bathtub! Now please, follow me, milady."

Al had successfully created a bath.

"It's not much in the way of an apology for what I did, but at the very least it'll warm you up."

He said proudly despite being covered in mud and slightly flushed.

"I never thought I'd take a bath here..."

A bit perplexed, Feena sank into the tub. She flinched at first, but her tired body got accustomed to the relaxing heat rather quickly.

"It takes time for the stones to cool down, so be careful!"

Al warned her, facing the other way.

"Where did you learn how to make a bath like this?"

Feena asked. It was a fair question. Althos may have been poor, but thanks to the ley lines running through the ground, they had access to hot water. Not to mention the fact that Al was royalty. There was no reason for someone like him to dabble with makeshift open-air baths?

"My brother taught me."

"Your brother?"

Yeah. I'm sure could make something much more impressive, though."

Feena tapped her temple, trying to shuffle through her memory. She started to remember the story about Al's twin brother...

“I think it was about ten years ago... Ah!”

She wanted to take it back, but it was too late.

“Don’t worry about it. I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t hurt, but I can’t be sad about it forever.”

Al waved his hand, signaling that he wasn’t mad. Instead, he started talking about his late brother.

“My brother was exceptionally talented both in swordsmanship and magic. Not only that, but he could put anything into practice after learning it just once. He was nothing short of a genius.”

He described his brother cheerfully.

“Back in the day, we would slip out in the middle of the night and set up a camp at the nearby river. That’s where he taught me how to make a bath, along with some simple dishes.”

Al recalled how their tutors would sternly scold them the following morning. He’d been smiling ever since he started talking about his brother.

“Did you like your brother?”

Feena asked, even though she knew it was a touchy subject. She simply wanted to learn more about Al, which took precedence over the guilt she felt from asking.

“Yeah, very much so. If my brother were still alive, maybe I would’ve never become king and the Empire would’ve never targeted us. Heck, maybe we’d have crushed them long ago and become the greatest power on the continent.”

But Al simply reminisced about his brother while directing his gaze at the dazzling moon.

“Then maybe no one would’ve found out that I’m the Demon King’s vessel and I’d have led a normal, everyday-- Eh?”

A pair of snow-white arms suddenly wrapped around his neck.

“H-Hey! You just got unbound... and it’s cold... and--”

“It’s okay. I can handle it for now.”

He was taken completely off-guard by the sudden, warm hug. Feena gently whispered into his ear.

“I’m happy you became Althos’ king.”

“You’re only saying that because you don’t know my brother. He--”

“I still would’ve preferred you.”

Al could feel Feena’s small mounds pushing up against his back as she hugged him tighter.
Then, to make things even tougher on him, she whispered sweetly in his ear.

“And don’t worry about Heavenly Surge. I’m always ready for it...”

She was right on the mark, as if she could read Al’s mind. Unable to think of a proper answer, he gently touched Feena’s arms.

“Al...”

He could feel her sweet, warm breath on his neck. No matter how thick-headed and antisocial he was, he knew what came next.

“Guhehehe! Look at these kiddos screwin’ out in the open!”

Unfortunately, the next thing he heard wasn’t quite as romantic. Because they had severely neglected their defenses, Al and Feena’s little world was disturbed. The intruders were slowly closing in.

“The... Empire?”

Three Empire soldiers, presumably patrolling the area, were closing in on them. They split up, trying to surround Al and Feena while wearing disturbing grins. Before Al could even regret his impudence, Feena quickly sank back into the water.

“Hey, hey, what’s the big fuss about showin’ your boobies!? Though it ain’t like you got mu--”

“Frigid Tomb.”

The cocky soldier, along with his horse, was frozen in place. She must’ve been absolutely enraged by his rude comments, as she’d used one of the three most powerful spells at her disposal. The soldier was ensnared in a cold, eternal

grave. His consciousness was intact, but he would ever so slowly perish.

I'll have to be careful what I say around her.

Al reminded himself as he grasped his scythe.

"Feena, stay there! I'll take care of the rest!"

He couldn't let a girl take care of all his problems.

"Focus on the man! Catch that weakling and take him as a hostage!"

One of the soldiers gave an order and started galloping toward Al, his partner mirroring his actions. They were closing in on him from both sides at roughly the same speed.

"I have to say, I'm about to take offense to this."

He disappointedly fixed his grip on his scythe after being called a weakling.

"Do you have any idea how many times I've survived the death stares of two Divas at the same time!?"

Shouting something seemingly irrelevant, he charged toward the soldier on the right, avoiding their pincer.

"You really think you can win in a duel!?"

The incoming attacker anticipated that and drew his sword to strike.

"Too slow!"

Al swung at the incoming blade.

clang!

The blade was sent flying into the thickets. Using his momentum, he spun around and knocked the soldier off his horse with the handle of his scythe.

"Gahh!"

Though the soldier tumbled to the ground, his horse passed by like nothing had happened.

"Hah! Your attacks may as well be in slow motion compared to Sharon's swings!"

Al spun around and looked straight into the eyes of the other soldier, frozen in place by what had just transpired.

“So, do you want a beatdown from me, a freezing from her, or to surrender? The choice is yours.”

Feena, finally completely clothed and grasping her wand, slowly walked up to Al. Now the soldier had no chance to escape.

“I give, I give! C’mon, we were just having some fun with that lovely girl.”

The soldier dropped his sword and lifted both arms high into the air.

“Lovely...”

Feena totally knew he was making excuses.

“I-Indeed! Traveling together with such a lovely lady would be a dream come true, your excellency!”

The soldier that suffered the blow from Al stood up and joined the conversation. Al wanted to end it as soon as possible, as they were getting on his nerves, but seeing Feena’s delighted smile made him change his mind. That was a mistake on his part, though.

“Very much so! I would give my life to travel with a woman as beautiful as you! Honestly, you’re like a doll-- Aghh!”

He suddenly screamed.

What happened!?

The situation did a one-eighty the moment his thoughts wandered off. There was no one in the vicinity besides themselves and the soldiers, but the previously happy Feena was standing right in front of the screaming soldier...

“What are you doing, Feena!?”

Having finally caught up on what had happened, Al looked at Feena. Her gentle smile was no more, her icy blue eyes instead filled with a raging flame.

I guess what they say about blue flame burning hotter is true.

Her eyes certainly supported that theory. Her rage was not a blind bloodlust that engulfed the heavens, the earth, and everything in between; rather, it was

a directed attack that would leave nothing in its wake. And she was directing that rage at the soldiers.

“I’m not some silent doll!”

“I never sai-- Eep!”

Countless magic circles trapped the completely broken man. With that much firepower, she probably could’ve erased a mansion from the face of the earth.

“I can talk like anyone else... I have my own will... I do what I see fit!”

“Yes, of course! I’m begging you, spare me!”

Feena, grinding her teeth in frustration, stared at the cowering soldier.

This is the first time I’ve seen her get so emotional.

Al was awestruck for a moment, but...

“I’ll kill you!”

She said as if she were a completely different person. But at least it woke Al up.

“Feena, stop! He already gave up!”

Feena turned her head toward him with a hostility that caught him off-guard.

“Al. He called me a doll!”

He’d heard it too, but it hadn’t sounded like an insult at all.

“I can’t. He’s done.”

The sad, defeated girl turned back toward the soldier.

“Shoot!”

With a snap of her fingers, all her magic circles targeted the enemy. Luckily, Al was holding his scythe.

“Crap! Please make it!”

He thrust his arm out and unleashed his black spell, which engulfed Feena’s magic circles.

“Why...?”

Finally seeing a lively reaction from Feena was a nice change of pace, though he didn't have the time to admire it in face of her boiling rage. But he couldn't give in, either. He stuck his scythe into the ground, stretched out his arms, and approached her.

"I already told you the reason. I won't take part in murder, no matter if it's a friend or a foe. If you want to stay with me, then make sure you remember that! If you can't, we'll have to part ways!"

Al was worried he had been a bit too harsh, but it was too late. Feena stared at him while biting her lip. He was prepared to defend himself if she attacked, but...

"I-I'm s-sorry..."

Giant tears began pouring from her puppy-dog eyes as her bloodlust vanished into nothingness.

Haah... How many times have I made her cry today?

Al was right, but that didn't change the fact that he made her cry.

"Sorry. I'm not mad or anything."

Once again deep in self-deprecation, he gently pet Feena's head.

About thirty minutes later, Al came back from cleaning up to see Feena sitting with her arms around her knees. He'd considered letting the soldiers go after helping them get rid of their possessions, but they ran the risk of them coming back with reinforcements, so he simply tied them to a tree. They threatened him with all kinds of things, saying they'd never forget and whatnot, but Al was kind enough to tie them as high up as possible so the wild animals couldn't reach them... probably.

"Have you calmed down?"

With his composure finally regained, Al walked up to Feena and poured some tea that had been heating over the open fire.

"It's not as good as my sister's, but it should help you relax a bit."

Feena took the cup and went back to sulking.

“Y’know, I think I went too far. Please forgive me.”

Making up was more important than being right, but Feena simply shook her head.

“Haah... I thought I’d finally cleared up the misunderstandings, but...”

Al let out a deep sigh.

“It’s not that...”

“Huh? What’s not that?”

Al thought that he might have misheard Feena’s tiny whisper.

“It’s... I-I... I did it again...”

“What, when you snapped? I was shocked, but in a good way. I’ve never seen you that invested in anything.”

He tried to keep up the conversation, but it didn’t help with Feena’s gloominess in the slightest.

“I can’t remember anything from my childhood.”

She lay down on her stomach, faced Al, and started talking about her past. Al simply listened to her silently.

“Supposedly, I was a genius Diva from birth. I could use magic sooner than I could walk. I was a lively, bright girl, loved and adored by everyone.”

You don’t normally say that about yourself! And what’s with that “supposedly”?

Al tilted his head as he listened.

“But one day when I was six, my power went berserk during an experiment. I lost all my memories until that point.”



Little by little, she quietly opened up about her childhood.

“After that, I became a silent, stoic, adorable girl.”

Al found the “adorable” part unnecessary, but it would’ve been rude to mention, so he kept it to himself.

“Everyone pitied me. ‘This poor little girl lost her emotions in an accident. She’s like a doll now’, they said. But no matter how many times I read my diary, I can’t recall my memories and my life up to that point.”

She rubbed her eyes, doing her best to hold back her tears.

“I read a lot of books about love and married life before I came to Althos. I didn’t want to fail again. I didn’t want to become a doll again.”

I see, so that’s why... Wait, what kind of books was she reading!?

Al finally understood why she always seemed so stiff.

“I thought I was doing well, but...”

He knew even if she didn’t say it; the word “doll” triggered her trauma. He was left wondering how to respond, but something floated through his mind.

“Wait, didn’t Sharon call you the same thing once?”

Al asked curiously.

“She’s a rabid, ferocious, red gorilla! Animals can’t control what they say.”

“Isn’t that kinda rude!?”

Al was a bit taken aback. Feena didn’t get up, but the heavy atmosphere was gone.

“And she’s my... friend, so... I’ll let her get away with it.”

She said in the tiniest of whispers. He couldn’t see her expression, but her ears were bright red, and not because of the fire burning nearby.

“Al... Would you still allow me to stay by your side?”

Feena asked in a shaky voice. She was being much more timid than usual, but Al knew there was only one answer.

“Of course you can. If you make sure to remember what I said, you can stay as long as you want.”

She flinched for a second before letting out a huge sigh of relief and relaxing. Simply imagining her expression put a smile on his face.

“I might’ve said something like this before, but...”

Al rubbed his nose before continuing.

“You can create new memories in Althos, so, umm... Y’know, Sharon’s planning to do the same, so... Regardless of how this wedding thing turns out, you’re more than welcome there.”

He could never bring himself to chase away a lonely, helpless girl with no place to go, even if he still had to work on his delivery.

“Mhm... Mhm...”

As if she’d found solace in Al’s words, Feena vehemently nodded in agreement. With things between them settled, Al’s cheeky side took over.

“Anyway, don’t you think you’re a bit too hard on Sharon? She’s your friend, all things considered.”

He made sure to emphasize the word “friend”. Feena flinched a bit upon hearing that.

“You... idiot!”

She screamed without raising her head.

The rays of the morning sun shined down on the forest. Al and Feena had planned to depart before daybreak, but they’d overslept after the events of the previous night. Both of them were extremely exhausted despite having spent the night under the protection of Feena’s defensive field, so doing anything steamy didn’t even cross their minds.

“Hey, hurry up! I want to get to Mistwood before lunch!”

“Ehehe... I slept with Al!”

But even in such a hurry, Feena called out to Al in what felt like her usual, cheerful tone. Al was delighted that she’d cheered up, but he’d have been even

more delighted if they could finally increase their pace. He let out a tired sigh, but for some reason, he felt a bit playful. He sped off on his horse without waiting for Feena.

“Ah, is this the game where you pretend to run away but then I catch up to you and hug you from behind like ‘Hehe, I caught you~’?”

Feena felt even more playful...

“All right, full speed ahead to Eshantel!”

But Al decided to ignore her entirely. With a small kick to its belly, Al’s horse sped up even more.

“Ah! S-Sorry! W-Wait, I can’t--! I can’t ride fast!”

Saying as much, Feena also had her horse gallop. Their current trip felt a lot more enjoyable than the previous one.

“All right, let’s take a small break here. We’ll cross the river after that.”

After a while, Al slowed down, finding some amusement watching Feena desperately try to catch up to him. He hopped off his horse and prepared for a small break.

“You meanie!”

Feena complained as she let go of the bridle. Both horses huffed as they approached the nearby river. The other side of it hid Eshantel and the Empire’s camp. In order to reach Eshantel without entering their encampment, they had to pass through the infamous Mistwood. Tales of people entering the forest and disappearing in the thick, dense fog weren’t uncommon. It was incredibly close, but the part they were in was completely unaffected. The cute little river and the sound of birds chirping made it a rather enjoyable spot.

“Such a nice weather. It’s a bit early, but how about a quick nap?”

He asked as he put his feet into the refreshing water.

“Yes! This is the perfect time to show off my special skills as a wife!”

She whispered while staring into the distance, but Al didn’t pay any attention to it. Catching up on sleep was more important than whatever Feena was

planning. He put his scythe down next to him as he lay on the ground. The last moment of his fleeting vision saw Feena slowly approaching him.

“Hm? What is it? Get some rest while you still can.”

She walked right next to him and gracefully sat down.

“Your clothes will get dirty if you sit there!”

Maybe because of his hypocrisy, Feena decided to completely ignore what he’d said. She sat next to him on her legs, leaving her lap completely open as she brushed off the dust that had fallen on it.
And then...

“Here, Al!”

She said excitedly, albeit with a hint of nervousness.

“Hm? ‘Here’ what?”

She was patting her lap as if inviting a kitten to jump on her.

Is this some kind of strange ritual?

Feena got fed up with Al’s failure to pick up on not-so-subtle hints, and...

“Al, we’re doing one of the signature moves for couples! I’m offering you a lap pillow!”

A long, long time ago, Al read about that in a book. Back then, he was giggling about couples doing something as silly as that.

“Huh...? Nah, it’s fine.”

And it seemed like he hadn’t changed much. He found it embarrassing, and frankly, a pain, so
he decided to opt out of Feena’s ritual.

“Uhhh... There!”

“Aghh!”

Feena resorted to a much more forceful solution as she locked Al’s head in her arms and pulled him onto her lap.

“Ow ow ow! Wh-What the--!?”

He looked at her, desperate for salvation as his back scraped against the ground and his neck made an alarmingly loud crack.

“Hehe... Amazing, isn’t it?”

But he couldn’t say a thing after seeing that wonderful smile.

“Well, aren’t you bold today?”

Well, maybe not just today, but...

Feena’s enchanting stare was too much for him, so he averted his gaze.

“Of course! You said yesterday, ‘Please don’t go anywhere! Your place is here, right beside me!’ It’s only natural to devote myself to you! I’m your wife, after all!”

“Strange, I don’t remember saying anything like that!”

He’d have liked to object, but he found himself lost in the gentle wind stroking his cheeks, the quiet, relaxing murmur of the small river, and his firm yet soft pillows, along with their lovely fragrance.

I see... So this is the wisdom our predecessors have accumulated over their lives.

He had finally fully accepted the history of his kind, but unfortunately, that soothing experience was short-lived, as he recalled the events from yesterday.

“Wait, what about Cecilia’s--”

Al tried to get up, but Feena pushed him back down.

“Hm? I already dispelled that.”

“Ah, okay... Wait, what does that mean!?”

Feena took her hands off the surprised Al’s head.

“I realized there was no point in bottling up my feelings and desires, so I dispelled it last night.”

“I see... Congrats?”

Al relaxed again...

“Thank you. Now we can...”

...and they entered the climax of humanity's heritage.

"Al..."

"Hm?"

Feena leaned closer to him.

Even like this, she's so squishy.

But he didn't have time to appreciate this experience. His mind drifted off, while Feena was already inches away from his face with her eyes closed.

"Umm, Feena? We really don't have to hurry with that Heavenly Surge thing, y'know..."

He tried to wiggle his way out of the situation, but he knew deep down that it was futile. Her aim wasn't Heavenly Surge. His head wasn't restrained and he wasn't being threatened with a sword, but maybe his instincts or the Demon King's power were stopping him from escaping. While he was lying there, completely defenseless, Feena's lips got even closer. But just then...

grrrrrrrr.

A mysterious, ear-splitting sound interrupted them. For a second, the completely dumbfounded Al looked into Feena's wide-open eyes, and then...

"Hyaaaaaah!"

He could practically see flames erupting from Feena's cheeks as she got up and ran away,
leaving Al's head behind.

"Aghh!"

With his comfy pillow gone, his head had an unfortunate meeting with the hard ground.
He took quite a bit of damage, but...

"Umm, I'm totally not hungry, it's just... I was so happy you were back to your usual self, I kind of forgot to eat my breakfast..."

She explained while turning as red as piping hot charcoal.

"You're always chasing me around half-naked, but you get embarrassed by

your stomach growling!? How does that make any sense!?”

Al couldn’t fathom her thought process, and though the situation seemed rather bad, it was actually the contrary. If they hadn’t been interrupted, he might’ve had to begin planning how to raise a little Al.

“I’m kind of hungry, too. It’s a bit early, but let’s have lunch.”

She was fun to tease, but it got scary after a while, so Al decided to stop.

“Found you!”

Suddenly, a familiar voice boomed through the forest.

“Huh!? Kanon?”

Feena shouted in surprise. The familiar clanking of heavy armor that it was him.

“Demon King, get away from Feena!”

He kicked up dust and used its cover to charge at Al.

“Crap!”

“Ugh... Here we go again.”

Feena said as if tired of Kanon’s antics, and turned toward him.

“Fireball.”

She cast her spell without warning.

“Hey, are you sure about that!?”

Al couldn’t hide his shock.

“It’s fine. Look.”

Feena said confidently, her eyes following the fireball she launched at Kanon. Her spell made a beeline toward the Inquisitor, and...

ping!

After what seemed like a direct hit, the fireball bounced off his armor as if nothing had happened.

“Kanon’s armor is infused with the Valkyrie’s divine protection. It can ward off

any kind of magic.”

“What’s with that god-tier armor!? And you cast that spell just to demonstrate his defense!?”

“No, you see... Magic can’t penetrate his defense, but objects can.”

Al was taken aback by Feena’s triumphant look for a second, before realizing the impending danger quite literally charging his way. He quickly looked back at his target, but...

“Umm, Feena... Where’s he going?”

Kanon, who had been charging right at him, suddenly changed direction...

bonk!

And crashed into a large tree.

“Ughh...”

Kanon split the tree in half, but lost consciousness because of the impact.

“His armor is incredible, but his intellect is less so. I’m sure he avoided looking at you out of fear of getting pregnant.”

“Even though he’s a guy?”

“Yes. Even though he’s a guy.”

“So your Fireball was...”

“Yes. It was a distraction.”

She nodded proudly. Al couldn’t believe what had transpired.

“Feena, tell me if I’m wrong, but is this guy...”

Feena probably understood what Al was referring to, as she nodded preemptively.

“Yes. To put it nicely, he’s pure. To put it not so nicely, he’s as plain as a board, as naive as a kid, and as dumb as a rock...”

“Wait, aren’t you friends? Dumb is... Never mind, not like I can disprove it.”

He gave up on defending Kanon.

“But he has his good points.”

Hearing her kind, lovely voice as she protected her beloved friend would’ve broken Al before,
but not anymore.

“All right! Let’s get him six feet under before he wakes up!”

“Al!?”

Feena snapped at Al after he said his thoughts out loud.

“Nah, I’m just kidding... Half kidding... Anyway, what should we do? I don’t think talking is an option as long as I’m here.”

He chose to put that aside, however. Feena let out a deep sigh before taking something out from between her breasts.

“Your cleavage is like a magician’s hat; I never know what you’ll pull out next! So, what do you have this time?”

Despite Al’s slightly cynical comment, she proudly presented a...

“It’s a fake mustache!”

“I can see that, but why!?”

Al was getting genuinely curious.

“I figured we might need it one night.”

“For what!? No, you know what, don’t answer that!”

He violently shook his head.

“So, what, am I gonna just put it on? Do you think this will fool anyone?”

Kanon may not have been the sharpest tool in the shed, but such a simple disguise was seriously pushing it.

“Now he’ll think you’re a rich nobleman.”

Al’s gut reaction was ‘Are you kidding me?’, but Feena’s confident smile was enough to make him believe in her.

“Well, you’re his friend, and he can’t hurt me anyway, so...”

“Don’t worry, I’m sure it’ll work. And more importantly...”

She was as stoic as ever, but Al felt a teasing aura seeping from her. Either way, he gave up arguing and stuck the fake mustache above his lips.

“Uhh... Where am I?”

A bit later, Kanon opened his eyes.

“I was on patrol, when...”

“Are you awake?”

His thoughts were interrupted by a blue-haired girl popping into his sight.

“Huh!? Feena!?”

His voice boomed through the silent forest. After realizing that it was his old friend Feena, Kanon stood up.

“Feena? Is that really you? Look, it’s me! Kanon!”

Kanon got caught up in the moment and hugged Feena tightly.

“I know... Kanon, it hurts... Fireball.”

It must’ve been painful, since she furrowed her brow and shot a fireball right at Kanon.

“Feena, I know he’s going to repel it, but don’t you think it’s still going a bit too far!?”

Even Al couldn’t hold his tongue when he saw that.

“Ahaha, I know this power! It’s really you!”

But despite being sent rolling across the ground, Kanon stood up with a smile.

“What, is launching a fireball your greeting now!?”

Completely disregarding Al’s comment, Kanon rushed up to Feena.

“Ah, right! I’m so sorry for what happened, I thought you were being controlled by the-- Wait, did you break free from the Demon King’s control?”

He grabbed Feena’s shoulders again, but in a much more wary fashion. If Feena answered poorly, it would trigger an all-out war.

smirk.

She shot a mischievous smile at Al.

“Yes, it’s me. I escaped when that dirty, perverted Nympho Lord’s spell weakened.”

Nympho Lord...

Al stared right at Feena, but she simply brushed it off with an impish smile.

“Thank goodness! I’m so happy you’re safe!”

Kanon had totally fallen for it. He patted Feena’s shoulders and proudly huffed under his helmet.
Their lie had been planted as the one and only truth inside him.

“So, who’s our guest? I feel like I’ve seen him be-- Wait, he’s a guy!”

I hope he didn’t see through my... less than masterful disguise. Though he only said I’m a man, so we might still be safe.

Due to his fear, Kanon hadn’t directly seen Al’s face during their battle, but fooling him with a fake mustache was just wishful thinking. While trying to keep a straight face, Al took a step forward to introduce himself, but...

bam!

Kanon blasted him away with his fist before he could say anything. Since Kanon was a relic user, his punch couldn’t directly reach Al, but...

“Gahh!”

The sheer force of the attack made him eat some dirt.

“Hey! I don’t care if you’re Eshantel’s Inquisitor or whatever, how dare you attack me out of nowhere!?”

As Al finally grasped what had just transpired, he berated Kanon in a manner unfit for royalty.

“Ahhh, how crude! And more importantly, he’s a guy! Feena, what are you doing with another man!?”

What a disaster of an introduction for both parties. Al glared at Kanon and

decided that there was no need for formalities around him.

“Kanon, he is...”

Feena tried to put a stop to the explosive situation before someone, most likely Al, got seriously hurt.

“Feena, you knew he’d assault me all along?!”

“Yes, though... I didn’t think it would get this bad...”

“Don’t you dare talk to Feena, you filthy, perverted animal! I know! You must’ve done something to her in exchange for helping her escape, you damn peon!”

Kanon instantly shut down their small talk.

“I mean, I take offense to being called a perverted animal, but why am I a peon now!?”

Enraged, Al still found the time to poke some fun at Kanon. Maybe his increased resistance to verbal abuse was thanks to a certain red-haired girl, but either way, he wasn’t happy with the situation.

“Hehehe, I can tell from a glance! Look at Feena; her sheer cuteness and gorgeous clothes prove her wealth! You have some nerve to approach her as a simple commoner! My proof? Look at that scythe on your back! Why else would you carry around a tool used by peasants!?”

“...”

Kanon took Al’s lack of retort as an admission of his status, and the corners of his mouth curled into a triumphant smile.
But in reality, the absurdity of Kanon’s deduction left Al completely speechless. He had the detective skills of a housebroken dog.

“Pffft.... The Demon King’s scythe is nothing more than a peasant’s tool... Pffft!”

Feena was borderline rolling from laughter just out of Kanon’s sight. Al decided he’d have a serious talk with her the next chance he got.

“Either way, I have to appreciate your efforts to take care of her despite being

an animal. Let me hear your name.”

Without any knowledge of Al’s inner struggle, the master detective arrogantly asked Al for his name. Annoyed as he may have been, he was still speaking to Eshantel’s inquisitor. He had to be the bigger man and let it slide.

“I’m Alfonz, but my friends call me Al. I’m delighted to meet you, Eshantel’s Womanizer.”

In Al’s eyes, his response was impeccable. But only in Al’s eyes.

“Hahaha, you don’t hold back, do you? How about we bury the hatchet for now?”

Kanon said, but it felt more like he wanted to split Al’s head wide open with that metaphorical hatchet than anything else. Al could practically see Kanon’s cheeky smile behind his steel helmet.

“Geez, this is no time to fight!”

“How do you expect me to befriend this guy, Feena!?”

“You have some nerve, calling her ‘Feena’!”

No one could blame Al for wanting to fight back, but he was starting to get tired of their angry staredown,
so...

“All right, we’re done here! Let’s go, Feena!”

As Al turned his back to Kanon with Feena in tow...

“Ah, wait up!”

Kanon called out to them. Just then...

wham!

“Gahhh!”

For the second time, Kanon swung at Al.

“Ahaha, sorry. I always feel like Feena’s in danger when she’s with another man...”

“What’s that mean!? You’re the only threat here!”

“Wow, you can take a punch.”

Al had been tempered by a certain red-headed girl, so he was quickly back on his feet, shooting off his remarks.

“Y’know, I’m still curious why you punched me!”

Kanon was outside his reach, so another angry staredown began.

“Ahaha, don’t worry about it. I’ll take care of Feena, you can go back to the fields or whatever.”

Kanon turned towards Feena, acting as if Al wasn’t even there.

“You finally managed to escape that pervy Demon King! Now, join up with me! That lowly Demon King will be no match for the two of us; he’ll be sealed in no time! Heck, we might even defeat him for good!”

Kanon’s boasting had been edging Al, but in all fairness, he’d already thrown not one, but two punches.

“Heh. You seriously think that Althos’ king is a pushover?”

He had to vent his frustration.

“Althos’ king...”

Just as Kanon whispered that in a quiet, menacing tone, his attitude changed instantly. It was not simple anger or bloodlust, but something much more sinister. Al felt the same energy emanating from him on the battlefield.

“Althos’ king is my nemesis. I promised my fallen comrades that I would cut off his head and mount it in front of their graves.”

His tone was different as well, as if something had possessed him.

I know he hates men, but I didn’t think it’d be to this extent.

Al shot a concerned look at Feena.

I’ve never seen him like this.

Feena signaled with a shake of her head.

“I even went as far as to swear allegiance to our greatest enemy, the Empire.”

His sinister aura dissipated, leaving only an expression of grave sorrow on his

face. But he'd admitted to working with the Empire. Before, there had been a slight chance that Kanon would listen to Al if he'd explained himself, but that went right out the window.

"I see. Then you keep doing what you have to."

"Feena, what!?"

Feena interrupted Al's thoughts.

What is she saying!?

He quickly tried to stop Feena from strengthening Kanon's resolve, but...

"But please, wait before you attack Althos."

It seemed like there was no need.

"Why should I do that?"

Kanon asked, curious about his friend's request.

"I can't tell you now, but it's important. I'm begging you, wait a bit."

"Hmmm, so you want me to delay the attack, but you can't say why. It's a rather dubious request, even for a friend."

"Kanon..."

This wasn't a friendly chat between two friends anymore; sparks were flying between them.

"Inquisitor Kanon!" "We found 'em!"

Several warriors on horseback trampled over the tense atmosphere.

"Seems like my entourage has arrived."

Kanon's expression lightened as he waved at his comrades.

"Ooh, my Inquisitor! It's good to see ya safe!"

The warriors hopped down from their horses, relieved. To confirm his well-being, they rushed over to Kanon as if their heavy armor were made of paper.

"Inquisitor, you have to tell me if you leave on patrol!"

"Ahh, sorry, Toshisaka. I didn't want to trouble you any further."

“You’ve got it all wrong, Inquisitor! There’ll be trouble if you disappear!”

“Exactly! He went searchin’ like a mad dog when he couldn’t find you!”

“Zip it, Gengai! You talk when you dun’ even have the saddle on!”

The warriors let out a hearty laugh.

“Okay, sorry. That was my bad!”

Kanon said joyfully.

How are they on such good terms when his troops are all men!?

As Al pondered the inconsistency of Kanon’s character...

“They’re my troops, so it’s fine!”

Kanon solved his inner conflict.

“Inquisitor, who are they?”

One of the warriors looked toward Al and asked.

“Right. This is Subdera’s Diva, Feena, though... I’m sure you all knew that. The man next to her is a newly-rich, selfish peon.”

Al’s introduction, to the surprise of no one, was incredibly rude.

“I’m Feena of Subdera. It’s a pleasure to meet you all.”

Feena’s textbook greeting was a stark contrast to Al, grumbling beside her.

It’s times like this that reminded me that she’s royalty, no matter how ditzy she may be.

“Al, we’ll have to talk later.”

She shot a sharp glance at Al as she whispered that. It left one wondering if the Divas had special mind-reading powers.

“Your face says more than your mouth.”

But the secret lay in his lack of a poker face.

“Ummm, I’m Alfonz. I’m a runaway, newly-rich, selfish peon from Althos.”

He didn’t want to pick a fight with a pack of capable warriors, so he parroted Kanon’s words.

“Alfonz, you say?”

Toshisaka stroked his chin while staring at Al.

“Is there a problem, Toshisaka? Ah, wait, I get it! Handsome as you may be, you’re much more interested in men than women! But let me warn you, he’s a sly bastard! Go for someone else!”

Kanon once again used his masterful deduction skills.

“Wh-Wh-What are you saying, Inquisitor!? I’m not really...”

Toshisaka desperately tried to deny those claims, but...

“Ahaha, then I should watch my back too, huh?”

“P-Please! Stop fooling around, Inquisitor!”

Toshisaka was turning as red as a beet. Al was left wondering if that kind of relationship was part of Eshantel’s culture, as the other soldiers were simply grinning as if they were used to this kind of jest.

“Inquisitor, order Toshisaka to fondle that wo--”

swing

The warrior who was fooling around was met with Toshisaka’s blade before he could even blink.

“Kanemitsu, I didn’t think you’d sink that low...”

“I was just kiddin’...”

With a drop of cold sweat running down his cheek, Kanemitsu raised his hands.

“I see I was wrong. Sorry, my reasoning is usually on point.”

Kanon said, a bit disappointed. His trust in his deductive abilities was clearly misplaced, judging by his performance. Al decided to keep his mouth shut about that, though.

“But Toshisaka, I want to be the first to know if you ever fall in love!”

Toshisaka calmed down when he saw Kanon’s bright smile, and the surrounding soldiers all let out tired sighs. Looking at them, Al felt like, for once,

Kanon’s deduction had some truth to it.
He knew some people would rather go for the same sex, and he didn’t have any problems with that... as long as he wasn’t involved. While Kanon was lost in thought, the warriors finished bonding over their little chatter. Kanon hopped on the spare horse his people brought him.

“Feena. I don’t know what’s going on, but since you’re a trusted friend of mine, I’ll wait two days. I expect you to visit me and explain yourself in the meantime.”

He said with a lonely smile.

“It’s not much, but I hope it’ll ease your journey.”

Toshisaka handed Al a fist-sized pouch. It was rather heavy, so Al figured it must’ve been for travel expenses.

But why did he give this to me?

Something was off. If it was for travel expenses, it would’ve made more sense to give it to a Diva than some unknown peasant.

Do they think I’m Feena’s butler or something?

Al looked at Toshisaka as he pondered the situation.

“Well then, until next time.”

He stared at them for a few seconds before turning around.

“I’m praying for your safety, Feena. You, peon! Remember that if you dare touch the adorable girl, no matter where you run, I’ll find you and cut you up!”

Al could almost see Kanon’s eyes twinkle under his helmet. After waving goodbye to Feena one last time, Kanon gracefully turned around and left. He seemed like a well-mannered royal.
Yes. He seemed like one.

“Geez, what the hell is up with that fake Diva!?”
Al whispered to himself in rage as he watched Kanon leave.

A few hours after Kanon departed, Al and Feena entered Mistwood. Brusch informed them that the fog would clear right before lunchtime, but that time

had unfortunately been taken up by Kanon's unexpected appearance, so they lost their chance. Entering the forest regardless was be a huge mistake. They knew the fog would be bad, but not to the extent it was. Unable to see more than a couple inches ahead, they were completely lost. Al couldn't even see Feena's face despite the fact that she was walking right next to him. They'd figured it would be dangerous to advance on horseback, so they slowly pulled their horses behind them while inching toward their destination. At least, that was their plan.

"Damn, I didn't think it'd be this bad."

"Me neither..."

Feena's answer was exceptionally reserved. She may have been shaken up after their chance encounter with Kanon.

"Umm... You sure it was a good idea to stay with me? Maybe you could've convinced Kanon if you'd gone with him."

Al asked Feena
without a hint of the jealousy that was eating away at his mind the day before. He was genuinely worried about her.

"No, not yet."

But she shot down his proposal.

"What do you mean, 'not yet'?"

Feena was extremely confident in her answer, so Al had to know her basis for it.

"I think Kanon is under the control of a spell."

"A spell? I didn't feel any traces of ma-- Ah! That creepy feeling!"

He looked to his side to check Feena's expression, but he couldn't see a thing.

"Yes. I could feel a slight distortion of magical energy when he snapped at you."

"A distortion, huh...? Can you do anything about it?"
It seemed like she was shaking her head.

“Not with my current power. But everyone in Eshantel adores him; they’re incredibly close. Maybe their voices can get through to him.”

Al could see that working somehow, judging from how playful they all were.

“And...”

Feena was getting more excited.

“And I won’t let anyone interrupt our pre-marriage honeymoon, be it friend or foe!”

“We’re not really on a honeymoon, are we!?”

It seemed like their talk really helped Al come to terms with his feelings. Even as he said that, he didn’t feel bad at all.

“I wish I could see your face...”

Oh, is that why she’s feeling down? It’d be a nice change of pace if she was serious for once!

He thought to himself, but had a big smile on his face. Just as things were starting to look up...

“Who’s there!? Answer me!”

They heard a rustle coming from the thickets nearby. Al immediately reached for his scythe, and it seemed like Feena had readied her wand as well.

“Feena, let’s stick together. We don’t want to hit each other on accident!”

“Got it!”

He felt Feena slide up to him.

“Ah! Not that close!”

He took a step back.

This is bad. If we get too close, Heavenly Surge might activate!

He’d wanted to do that at the beginning of the trip, but he changed his mind after what happened the day before. He felt that doing it by chance or by force wouldn’t be right. That’s why he told Feena to stay back a bit, but...

“Meanie! You don’t like me?”

She completely misread the situation.

“What? No one said that!”

“Then, can I stay by your side?”

“No, I mean, Heave--”

“You hate me after all...”

Feena wouldn’t understand his feelings.

Maybe I should just hug her and let Heavenly Surge loose.

It crossed his mind, but...

“Umm... Sorry to barge in on your little affair, but...”

“What affair!?”

Wait… I know this voice.

“Are you Inquisitor Kanon’s warrior... Toshisaka?”

Al asked.

“Yes, I am. I know it’s hard to see, but please follow me.”

Without any explanation, the bushes began rustling again, signaling Toshisaka’s departure.

“What should we do?”

Feena asked, completely perplexed. It was an alarming situation; they didn’t know if Al’s identity had been found out, but they were in a dangerous place and in desperate need of a guide.

“All right, let’s follow him. Just don’t let your guard down.”

“Got it.”

With that, they began following the footsteps ahead of them.

“What in the world is this?”

Neither Al nor Feena could believe what was happening. It was only been a few minutes after they started following Toshisaka, but the thick fog had completely disappeared. They were walking through a dense forest under the clear, blue

sky, accompanied by the cute chirping of birds.

“Ah, I totally forgot about this! We’re on a secret path, known only to the people of Eshantel!”

“Couldn’t you have remembered that sooner!?”

“Amazing, Lady Lesfina. I didn’t think you’d remember it.”

Toshisaka answered with a cheerful smile, though his cheeks were unnaturally plump,
as though he’d been punched right in the face...

“So, would you tell us why you left your Inquisitor behind to come back and help us?”

Al wanted to thank him from the bottom of his heart, but first, he had to know why he went back for them. It was dangerous, but the sooner he learned the reason, the better.

“I simply happened to have a little something to do around there, Your Majesty.”

“And what would be that little so-- Wait, ‘Your Majesty’!?”

That crucial expression was stated so naturally that it almost slipped right past Al.

“H-How do you know Al’s iden--”

“Feena!”

It was already too late.

“Hahaha, I had a hunch that was the case.”

Thanks to Feena’s slip-up, he’d managed to confirm that Alfonz, the newly-rich peon, was, in fact, the king of Althos, Alnoa.

“Feena...”

It was so sudden that Al couldn’t really blame her.

“Ah... Sorry...”

“No, no, you didn’t slip up or anything. I’ve met His Majesty before.”

Toshisaka tried to cheer up the grumbling Feena.

“We’ve met? When? Where?”

The tables had turned. Feena intently stared at him, but Al couldn’t recall their meeting in the slightest, so he simply shook his head.

“I was present at your enthronement as a representative of Eshantel.”

Al had certainly had an enthronement ceremony, but he was way too nervous and confused at the time to remember the guests.

“I’m so sorry, but I was just...”

Al started to make up an excuse, but...

“Al, I will make you a special potion that helps with your memory once we get home!”

Feena crossed her arms and pouted.

“Well, I couldn’t see you too well in that thick fog. What gave you away was Lady Lesfina’s unrest.”

The tables had turned once again.

“Maybe you need a potion to up your acting! Wait, so whose side are you even on!?”

“Huh? I’m Inquisitor Kanon’s loyal subordinate, of course.”

Toshisaka answered, looking a bit dumbfounded. Al realized that most of the Eshantel troops he’d met were rather hard to read. One could never be sure what they were thinking.

“And what are you going to do with this information? Are you gonna run and tell him? Or do you want to...”

Al reached for his scythe. He was preparing himself for a tough battle. The way Toshisaka drew his sword while they were fooling around and his skillful way with words alluded to him being a great threat. Or maybe Feena and he were too easily impressed. Toshisaka opened his mouth to answer the nervous king.

“Oh, by the way. Even if Your Majesty was wearing a nametag, Kanon

probably would've bought your story. You've seen his less than powerful reasoning firsthand."

"That may very well be the case."

Feena agreed, and Al let out a deep sigh. He was starting to feel a bit sorry for the Inquisitor. Both his best friends and subordinates thought of him as a fool.

"However, the Inquisitor is as pure as the whitest snow."

Toshisaka said with a gentle smile. But he didn't notice the couple of mischievous ones that appeared right after.

"Really? Well, they do say love is blind."

"You need your head checked if you think 'pure' is a good description of him."

"Please; why would you assume that? I'm nothing more than the Inquisitor's aide-de-camp."

Toshisaka's cheeks turned bright red the instant he heard their comments. He was probably purer than anyone else.

"So, what made you leave your beloved Inquisitor's side to come here?"

Al tried to get the conversation he'd derailed back on track.

"I'm not at all, not in the slightest, in no way in love with him, but I came here to talk about Kanon."

The moment the discussion got back on track, his gentle expression became much more sinister.

"Lady Lesfina, what did you think of Kanon today?"

Their eyes met. It seemed like everyone felt the same way, though Toshisaka was probably even more aware of Kanon's strange antics due to spending his days close to him.

"Oh. Well..."

They exchanged information, but since Al didn't know much, all he could tell Toshisaka was his plan to save Eshantel's citizens.

"So the Empire is working behind the scenes... Kanon's been acting weird

since his meeting with them...”

Toshisaka stared at Al as he repeated what he’d learned.

“Wh-What!? Wait, are you actually into...”

“I knew you were queer!”

“No, I’m not! Why are you instantly jumping to the same conclusion!?”

“Hey, I’m just paying back what I got from your lover.”

“We’re married. Being on the same wavelength is only natural.”

“Then why are you totally out of sync on this!? Honestly, it’s a bit disturbing!”

Al found Toshisaka rather sensitive after their brief interaction.

“I was simply wondering why Your Majesty reminds me of him so much!”

Toshisaka let out a deep sigh. He seemed rather tired; perhaps he had a lot of pressure put on him.

“Could you stop with that lukewarm stare of yours?”

He didn’t even have the energy to appreciate Al’s friendliness.

“At any rate, our goals are the same. I would like to ask the two of you to help save Eshantel’s citizens.”

With that, their discussion was finally back on track, though a single question still remained unanswered.

“Did you get permission from Kanon?”

The Inquisitor’s command was absolute for his warriors, but from the looks of it, Toshisaka was acting on his own. He took a deep breath.

“I took some time off...”

He whispered. Taking some time off could only mean...

“Did you... leave the army?”

That was the only plausible explanation. It seemed like his swollen cheeks were indeed due to a slap.

“My loyalty towards the Inquisitor is unwavering, however! I pride myself on

being a warrior of Eshantel! But... But... I want the old Inquisitor back as soon as possible.”

He gently slapped his own cheeks.

“Our previous meeting confirmed that this would be our best time to act.”

Everyone could see the determination in his eyes.

“So, can I ask to join the quest to save our people?”

Toshisaka took a step forward. Al instinctively jumped back due to the sheer amount of determination radiating from him, but Toshisaka pushed forward.

“I am a warrior of Eshantel. I cannot let an unrelated party, be it a good friend of the Inquisitor or anyone else, to save our people without my help!”

“Well, you did lead us out of that forest...”

Overwhelmed by his will, Al nodded.

“I’m against it.”

Feena jumped between the two.

“I think we should do it. He could lead us directly to Eshantel.”

But Feena kept shaking her head.

“We’re on our pre-marriage honeymoon...”

“That’s why!?”

Al covered his face with his hand, but he knew Feena was stubborn as a mule when it came to such a thing.

“Umm... I won’t disturb you at all... Ah! I heard that your love only gets stronger when you overcome an obstacle, so... may I join you?”

Feena crossed her arms and thought deeply.

“That could fuel our love!”

Her innermost thoughts were, unfortunately, audible to everyone in close proximity.

“I guess you can join, but do your best as fuel!”

She said like a merciful goddess lending a helping hand.

“Crap, I didn’t think they’d be this quick.”

They followed Toshisaka through Mistwood under the cover of the night. By dawn, they’d arrived at the edge of the dangerous woods overlooking the coastland town of Sanda, west of Eshantel’s capital. Unfortunately, they didn’t have the time to mourn at the heart-wrenching sight of the devastated, burnt fields.

“I thought they were departing later tonight...”

Feena whispered, confirming Al’s suspicions. Despite the information they had, however, Eshantel’s citizens had already been shoved onto the ships visible in the distance.

“What should we do? The docks won’t have enough cover for a surprise attack.”

Al answered his own question. Their operation wasn’t risky solely due to the lack of cover; abominations could easily prowl behind the rubble.

“Al, should I use illusion magic to disguise us?”

He thought about Feena’s proposal.

We’re still far away from the harbor, so a single spell won’t cover our tracks the whole way. What should we do?

Shortly after that, he came up with a solution.

“I’ll act as a decoy. You two take over the ship during the commotion.”

Al was ready to go to realize his strategy, but...

“No. If anything goes wrong, I should take the blame.”

Toshisaka caught Al by the arm and gave a hearty smile.

“Toshisaka...”

“Don’t tell me it’s dangerous; I’m well aware of that. Danger is the nature of our mission. But even if it’s in ruins, this is still my hometown. I’m probably better at hiding myself than Your Majesty is.”

He couldn’t argue with that.

“Al, we have to move.”

Feena agreed with Toshisaka’s plan and began preparing to depart.

“Haah, okay, but be careful! Kanon will have my head if I let you get a single scratch!”

Al said jokingly, but Toshisaka cast his eyes down.

“That won’t happen. One cannot return to being a warrior after leaving their position.”

He said with a bitter smile. In that instant, Al came up with an idea to help him.

“Then come live with us! We’re not exactly wealthy, so you might get a severe pay cut, but I can guarantee a place to stay and warm food on your table every day! Feena also lives there, so once we resolve this situation, I’m sure Kanon will come over every now and then.”

Al shared his plan. They’d only spent a day together, but Al already considered them friends.

“No offense, but Your Majesty is quite the dreamer.”

Toshisaka felt slightly embarrassed.

“You can just call me Al. Think about my proposal once we’re finished here, okay?”

With their planning over, they started getting ready to act.

“I’ll create a distraction on the other side of the harbor.

Toshisaka finished his preparations and left to carry out his duty.

“Ah, Toshisaka. I hate to ask you this, but if you run into any abominations...”

“I know. I’ll simply run around as a decoy to catch their attention. I won’t kill anyone.”

After correctly guessing Al’s request, he waved goodbye to them.

“The best of luck, Your Majesty.”

He said before departing.

“I’m praying for your success.”

Al waved back at him and returned his well-wishes.

“Rahh! Come at me if you want to get a beating!”

Toshisaka provoked the enemy at the other side of the harbor. He made for a successful decoy, just as he’d expected. His shout stole the enemy’s attention as he cut off the legs of the incoming abominations, completely immobilizing them. He used their bodies as obstacles and shields, successfully fending off the attacks coming from every direction. All the while, Al was thanking every deity he knew that he didn’t have to go to war against such talented warriors.

“I’ll have to win him over once this mission is complete.”

Al whispered to himself, hiding behind the ruins of a wall even though Feena’s spell masked their appearance.

“Al, we’ll talk about your homoerotic desires later. Focus on the task at hand.”

Feena totally misunderstood the meaning behind Al’s smile. But she was right nonetheless. They needed to focus on their mission.

“We’re nearly there. Are you okay, Feena?”

She nodded silently. Thanks to Toshisaka’s diversion, they’d managed to sneak near the ship without drawing any suspicion. He should have bought enough time for them to reapply the spell and sneak onboard.

“Okay, we’ll move with the next--”

“Ahhhh!”

He was interrupted by a sharp scream.

“Gwrahhhhhhh!”

Al turned his head toward the disturbing scream, only to see an abomination in the form of a wolf standing on two legs, ready to deal a finishing blow to Toshisaka.

“Tch, we were so close!”

He said begrudgingly, but there was no delay in his movements.

“Toshisaka, get down!”

Al said as he aimed his arm at the abomination.

“Come forth, power of the Demon King!”

He shouted, even though his words had no bearing. They were neither chants nor curses.
Regardless, black flames spewed forward from Al’s palm, blasting the abomination out of the way.

“Hey! More intruders over there!”

With that, Feena’s illusion was dispelled. The Empire’s soldiers quickly rushed out onto the deck and formed a defensive line. After Toshisaka spotted Al, he began rushing toward him while fending off countless attacks from the surrounding abominations.

“Geez, Al... but I can’t be mad at you. I would’ve filed for divorce if you hadn’t helped him!”

Feena said while conjuring up a fireball.

“My sincerest apologies, Your Majesty. I have failed my mission.”

“We have to push through! Let’s go!”

Their plan had failed, but they didn’t have time to lament. The three of them began forcing their way onto the ship, but...

“Gwrahhhhhhh!”

Dozens of abominations appeared in front of them.

“Out of the way!”

Al swung his scythe at the abominations.

“Fireball. Frozen Orb. Lightning Strike.”

Feena’s spells blew a couple of abominations out of the way.

“Watch out! They’re not the only threat here!”

Toshisaka followed their attacks with a deadly slash, but their joint attack didn’t amount to much in front of the countless abominations forming a wall

between the ship and them.

“Al, the ship is departing!”

Even before Feena made her comment, Al could see the huge ship hurriedly trying to set sail.

“Feena! Aim for the sail!”

Their ship was a generic sailing vessel. Without the sail, it couldn’t go anywhere.

“I will try... No, I will do it!”

“Toshisaka, you cover Feena!”

“Understood!”

Al and Toshisaka warded off the attacks aimed at Feena’s back.

“Fireball!”

Feena launched a fireball. Its target: the sail.

fwoosh!

The sail caught on fire in a moment’s notice. Thanks to that, they’d gained a bit of time. At least, they should have, but their hopes were swiftly crushed. The ship showed no sign of slowing down. Suddenly, dozens of oars appeared on either side of the ship.

“It was a galley all along!?”

Al shouted in frustration,
but...

“Feena, you handle the right side! I’ll take care of the left!”

“Got it!”

Al showed no sign of giving up either. They each prepared spells to destroy the oars, but...

“Gwahh!”

A giant ape-like abomination hurled itself in front of Feena’s fireball. Despite the flames eating away at its flesh, it stood its ground, blocking Feena’s line of

sight.

“Crap! Leave it to me!”

Al’s dark spell hit the abomination and blasted it out of the way. But then...

“Tch, there’s no end to them!”

Toshisaka’s katana got stuck in an abomination’s shoulder.

“Urahhh!”

But the abomination didn’t even flinch; instead, it swung its tree trunk-like arms directly at him.

“Uhh... Gahhh!”

Toshisaka somehow managed to block the attack, but he wasn’t able to stand his ground. He was blown back all the way to Feena. The abominations had gained the upper hand. They began flooding through the gap Toshisaka had left. Feena’s could see the boat, but she still couldn’t aim for it.

“Al, next to me!”

Holding Toshisaka by his nape, Feena began focusing her mana. Then, the moment Al jumped closed to her...

“Crimson Waltz: Burst Rondo!”

Normally, this would be a simple spell that caused a tiny explosion around the caster. It was widely used for creating a curtain of dust. However, due to Feena’s magical affinity, the spell tore boulders out of the ground, making them rain down on the abominations.

“It’s not over. Bam!”

She said in a teasing manner, but the scope of her spell widened the moment those words left her mouth. It was pure chaos. Al caught a glimpse of an unlucky abomination, struck directly in the jaw by a boulder. Several others were blasted away with the ground. Their numbers decreased by the second.

“Amazing! Is this the power of Subdera’s Diva!?”

“This is no time to stand in awe! Cover Feena, I’ll take care of the... ship...”

As the cloud of dust settled, Al realized that the ship had already gotten a few hundred meters away from the docks.

“We didn’t make it...”



Feena said, shocked.

“Damn...”

Toshisaka whispered as he collapsed to his knees. But Al hadn’t given up.

“No, I won’t accept this! There must be a way! Please, I have to come up with something!”

Al clenched his fist to the point that his knuckles cracked. His persistence was a double-edged sword. Some thought it was cool, but others thought he was simply bad at losing.

“I’ve got it!”
Al excitedly turned toward Feena. His sudden mood change made it seem like a boulder had hit him in the head.

“Feena! Can you make an ice wall--no, an ice bridge like last time? One that connects to the ship!”

“Huh? An ice bridge, you say?”

“Got it!”
The dumbfounded Toshisaka went completely ignored as Feena prepared her wand.

“Ice Wall!”

She chanted the spell. Suddenly, a long path of ice began extending across the water’s surface.

bam!

A direct hit on the ship. The bridge of ice connecting the land with the ship was finally complete,
stopping the ship in its tracks.

“Thanks, Feena! Please cover me!”

Al shouted as he started dashing toward the ship.

“He’s alone! Fire the bows!”

“Destroy the ice! Quick!”

The completely dumbstruck sailors finally began their counterattack. The archers prepared to attack and the oars began destroying the ice beneath the ship. Meanwhile, Al was running toward the ship at full speed.

“Come forth, wind!”

Feena was supporting Al while Toshisaka protected Feena. A strong gust of wind blew forth, scattering the arrows aimed at Al, though he also felt the effect of the spell and barely managed to stop himself from sliding into the water. Regaining his balance, he continued rushing toward the ship, but...

bam! crackle, crackle!

Sudden sounds of explosions interrupted the flow of the battle. The ice trapping the ship had been blown away.

“Damn, they had gunpowder!? I was so close!”

While trying to regain his footing, shaken by the blast, he stared at the ship that was sailing farther and farther away.

“Maybe I should ask Feena for another bridge. It’d most likely meet the same fate, though.”

Out of ideas, false hopes such as sprouting wings crossed his mind, until...

“Feena! Hit me with a fireball!”

Al turned to Feena and shouted.

“What!?”

Feena looked at him with eyes colder than a quiet winter’s night. Apparently, she wasn’t too excited to have a masochistic boyfriend.

“No, not like that! I want you to propel me all the way to the ship!”

Having heard his rushed explanation, Feena decided to go with the plan.

“Fireball!”

pew!

A moment later, the fireball struck the ice directly below Al’s feet and he was sent flying through the air.

“Hyaaaaaah!”

He flew toward the ship in a beautiful parabola.Given that she was a Diva, her impeccable aim was to be expected.

“Gahhh!”

A sharp pain surged through Al’s body, but he didn’t have time to lick his wounds. He quickly sprang up, ready to take action. The soldiers were caught off-guard, as shown by their delayed reaction to the man quite literally falling from the skies.

“Raaaaah!”

Al began his attack on the dumbstruck soldiers. Limp bodies collapsed onto the deck one by one after taking blows from the handle or accidentally touching the blade of the weapon.

“It’s like the scythe of Death itself, trapping the souls of anyone it comes in contact with.”

Conflicted about who the villain really was, Al’s mouth curled into a cynical smile.

“Fireball! Lightning Bolt!”

While they were focusing their attention on Al, Feena had managed to recreate the bridge and was closing in at full speed.

“Aaaaah!”

Toshisaka had also caught up to the group. He was pushing soldiers off the deck, one after another.

“Surrender, Empire dogs! You stand no chance!”

Judging by their overwhelming power, Al was certain of their victory.

“The Empire knows no defeat!”

However, the Empire didn’t share his perspective. Al turned around, ready to finish the tiring ordeal once and for all, but...
He was too late.

“Commander Gwain! What are you--!?”

The Imperial soldier referred to as Gwin walked up to a stack of barrels with a torch in his hand.

“That must be gunpowder.”

Toshisaka whispered.

“I’ll blast it away!”

Al raised his hand to stop Feena before she did anything rash.

“You’d blast all the prisoners and half the ship away!”

They couldn’t afford to take risks and act recklessly while the enemy had so much destructive force in their hands.

“Your Majesty, shall we distract him for a second?”

Toshisaka snuck his hand into his pockets. He probably had something in mind.

“Okay, but we’re doing things my way.”

Al took a quick glance at Toshisaka, who signaled his agreement with a slight nod.

Let’s see if he’s worth recruiting.

Al took a step back from Toshisaka, instantly drawing everyone’s attention.

“Hey, you! What do you think you’re doing!?”

He took another step back.

“You’d betray your comrades just to protect your honor!?”

“Sh-Shut up! You think you know everything!? If I fail this simple mission, not only will I be stripped of my class, I’ll fall directly into slavery! Who knows what’ll happen after that; they might turn me into a crude abomination with that almighty crystal of theirs! I’d rather have this ship and everything on it sleep with the fishes!”

Al planned to ask about the abominations in great detail, but first...

“There’s another way. Desert the Empire!”

“Desert... the Empire?”

Anyone could tell from the look in the commander's eyes that he was truly lost. Seizing the opportunity, Al took a step forward.

"Exactly. You can settle down in Althos instead! We may be poor, but there is no capital punishment for a failed mission. As the king, I myself can guarantee that!"

The commander's eyes sparkled when Al stretched his arms. Finally, Al could relax. But that blissful moment vanished in an instant.

"Pfwahahaha! You think the Empire wouldn't crush your puny excuse for a country!? I would rather die here than meet a traitor's fate!"

Unfortunately, the previous sparkle was not one of hope, but of insanity.

"Hyahh! Die!"

The mad commander dropped his torch on the barrels.

"Get down!"

Just as Al gritted his teeth, trying to cover Feena from the blast...

"Hey now, Mister. We would very much like to hear more about that crystal before you go up in flames."

As swiftly as the wind, Toshisaka snuck up on the enemy commander and caught the torch before it could land on the barrels.

"Y-You bastard!"

Toshisaka's blade pressed gently against the squirming commander's throat. Toshisaka had assessed the situation perfectly and come up with the most suitable plan.

"I don't care what it takes; I want him in my country."

Toshisaka smiled back at the happily grinning Al,
but...

"Arghhhh! Kill me! I'll die anyway, so take my life right here and now!"

The commander was violently struggling in an attempt to cut open his own throat with Toshisaka's blade.

“Don’t kill him!”

Hearing that, Toshisaka lowered his katana.

“Hyahh!”

The moment Gwain struggled free, he grabbed Toshisaka’s arm that held the torch.

“Die, you bastards!”

He pushed the torch toward the barrels.

“Your Majesty! Lady Lesfina! Get down!”

Al immediately jumped in to protect Feena.

bam!

It was a strangely quiet explosion for gunpowder. Once the shockwave had passed over, Al looked up...

“T-Toshisaka?”

Toshisaka was lying there, his clothes in tatters. The surrounding soldiers had been blown away, but for some reason, he’d remained in close proximity to the center of the explosion, though there was no time to investigate how that had happened. He stood up despite his injuries,
but his legs couldn’t support him for long.

“Toshisaka!”

Al rushed over to Toshisaka and held him in his arms, but his injuries were extremely severe.

“Toshisaka! Hold it together!”

“Gbwahh!”

Instead of an answer, only a massive amount of blood left his mouth. He was bleeding profusely from his stomach as well, despite his best efforts to apply pressure to his wound.

“Hey, is there a doctor in here!? Help... Help Toshisaka!”

Al cursed his decision to leave Cecilia behind.

“Magic is... forbidden for... us...”

Toshisaka turned his head toward Al. His more or less irrelevant answer was probably due to his fading consciousness.

“We can... use magic only once... in our lives to save the Inquisitor... Your invitation to Althos... meant the world to me... I would gladly ta-- Gahhh!”

“I know, just... don’t talk now!”

Al hugged him even tighter.

“Ahh, Your Majesty... My sincerest apologies, but... this is the end... for me... Please... tell Inquisitor Kanon...”

As his arms dropped to his side, blood began gushing out from the open wound in his abdomen.
Al desperately tried reapplying pressure to stop the bleeding, but...

“Shit, why won’t it stop!? Hey, Demon King! Stop protecting me and help someone else every once in a while, you bastard!”

While Al was cursing the Demon King, Toshisaka drew the dagger equipped to his belt.

“This is... an heirloom I received from... the Inquisitor’s father... Please, bring it back...

“Don’t screw with me! Who would be happy to receive a memento from a dead comrade!? You go and lob it at him yourself! So, please... Please open your eyes, Toshisaka!”

“Give the... Inquisitor... my regards... They’re...”

“Toshisaka!”

The dagger fell from limps hand.

“Sorry... I should’ve...”

Al’s own orders were what caused this situation.

“Al...”

Feena picked up the dagger and gave it to the grieving Al.

“Al. Toshisaka gave his life to protect his current master. The least you can do is... carry out his will.”

She said as large tears streamed down her cheeks.

How could anyone call her an emotionless doll!?

Looking at her, Al closed his eyes and...

“Toshisaka, I’m sorry you had to serve such a lousy leader. Don’t worry, I’ll carry out your wish. I promise.”

Al gently laid down Toshisaka’s lifeless body and took the dagger from Feena.

“I will give this to your true master.”

Al promised one last time before standing up.

“We’ll head back to Althos once we release the captive citizens and bury Toshisaka. I’ll put an end to this meaningless war. Will you stay by my side for a little longer?”

He looked straight into Feena’s eyes.

“Yes. You are Toshisaka’s master and my husband, so it’s my duty to carry out every one of your requests!”

Al thanked Feena and looked up at the sky.
Had he not, an unstoppable river of tears would’ve escaped his eyes...

Eshantel’s army was stationed a few kilometers away from Althos’ border, alongside the Empire’s soldiers.

“How long are we going to stand here idly, Inquisitor!? We’re here to aid in the assault on Althos, not to fool around at camp all day!”

The captain of the Empire’s forces, Bouda, stormed into the tent acting as the temporary headquarters.

“We have our own way of handling things. I deeply appreciate your help, but that doesn’t make you our boss. We’ll do as we see fit.”

The armor-clad Kanon didn’t say a word. Instead, his trusty aide, Kanemitsu, answered Bouda’s question. Bouda may have been the commander of the Imperial army, but he himself was a nobleman lacking any war experience. He

could never go toe-to-toe with a hardened veteran like Kanon.

“T-Tomorrow! Tomorrow is your last chance! If you don’t launch the assault we’ll pull out of this fight, got it!?”

“...”

After shooting one last angry stare at Kanon, Bouda promptly walked to the exit.

“Tch, this damn knock-off Diva!”

He said as if no one could hear him and withdrew from the tent, leaving Kanon alone with his guards. However, this time, Toshisaka was missing from their ranks.

“Inquisitor, if I may... I am well aware of your promise with Subdera’s Diva, but I advise to make your move soon.”

As if his commanding posture were simply a farce, Kanemitsu tried to persuade his lord to rethink his ways with a gentle, sweet voice.

“...”

Kanemitsu was getting looks from the other guards. Meanwhile, after a few moments of thinking, Kanon stood up, signified by the clunking of his armor.

“We will carry out our assault tomorrow. This fight will mark the end of Alnoa, the Demon King. Everyone, make sure you’re prepared to face the ultimate evil!”

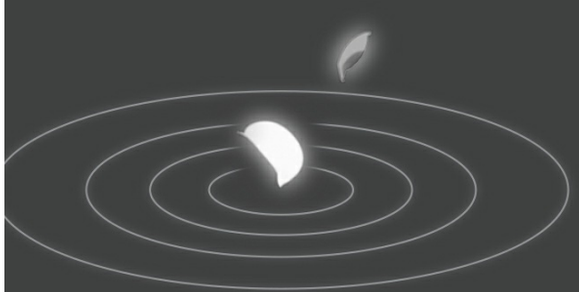
“Yes!” “Yes!”

After hearing his guards’ responses, Kanon left the tent.

“I’m sorry, Feena...”

He looked up at the golden sky spreading over all the lands and apologized to his dear friend.

Ch.4 Demon King vs Divas



“Enemy sighted! Ready the firecrackers! Fire!”

Althos’ siege began the next morning. Jamka intercepted the initial assault at a once-prosperous farmland that had been reduced to rubble.

“Use your shields to stop the cavalry! Use the firecrackers as a substitute smokescreen! Ruu, report on the Empire’s movement!”

Jamka hurriedly gave the army commands from their headquarters. Unfortunately, the three thousand troops under his command weren’t nearly enough to use any sort of grand military strategy. His formations were inevitably lacking, and their defenses nearly toppled at various points.

“No movement yet, Sir. Or rather, it’s as if they’re not even here.”

Said the vice president of the intelligence agency, Ruu, in a monotone voice. With Brusch on her way to escort Al, Ruu was now acting as Jamka’s aide.

“Oh my, what could this mean?”

Cecilia murmured from next to Jamka.

“The Empire should join the assault if this is an all-out attack, right? Anyway, I guess I can’t go wild just yet.”

And next to Cecilia, Sharon was eating sweets from atop her horse, not a care in the world. She probably believed that she didn’t have anything to do until Kanon’s arrival, so she was lazing around like a cat on a Sunday afternoon.

“Focus on the defenses! Ruu, keep your eyes peeled for any suspicious activity!”

Choosing to ignore the lazy Diva, Jamka bowed to Cecilia before giving his orders to the battlefield.

“Why hasn’t their defense line been destroyed!? You call yourself the strongest army in all the lands!? Pathetic! Bring it down!”

Kanon shouted furiously as his armor clanked on top of his horse.

“With all due respect, the enemy seems to have a rather capable tactician themselves. Not to speak of our ally’s utter lack of assistance... If only we had Toshisaka, he’d pierce through the enemy lines-- Oops, my apologies. ‘Twas but

a slip of the tongue.”

Feeling Kanon’s sharp gaze piercing through him, Kanemitsu promptly fell quiet.

“Damn it! How dare that scoundrel desert us right before this battle...?”

Kanon whipped his head toward face the battlefield and cursed the situation in a tiny whisper.
Toshisaka’s departure was a sudden blow for him. Immediately after their meeting with Feena, Toshisaka expressed his doubts about the Empire for the millionth time and advised sending a messenger to Althos. But, of course, Kanon’s stance was the same as before.

“I’ve made a decision. If you don’t like it, get out of here!”

Normally, that would’ve put an end to their disagreement. Normally. Things took a turn for the worse.

“Understood. I will step down as a warrior of Eshantel.”

“Huh!? What did you say!?”

Long ago, Kanon’s father had seen the potential in the little Toshisaka, and as such, he was made Kanon’s personal guard. They became close friends; Toshisaka begrudgingly helped Kanon elevate his pranks to the next level. Of course, that in turn meant they both were scolded together. Once they grew up and Kanon became the head of the warriors, Toshisaka was immediately promoted to second-in-command. Not only that, but he was the sole warrior who knew Kanon’s secret, which was kept tightly among the royalty. And then his friend, his brother left him, just like that.

“This is all the Demon King’s doing!”

Kanon said to himself, on the verge of exploding. But as if something was amplifying his emotions, the air around him changed.

“I-Inquisitor...”

Feeling that sudden change, Kanemitsu turned toward Kanon with an expression of deep sorrow. But Kanon completely ignored him. Instead, he looked up, as if something was flickering just above him.

“I’ve got it! If I take Demon King Alnoa’s head and present it to Toshisaka, he might realize his wrongdoings and beg for forgiveness! Then me, being the graceful lord that I am, will, of course, pardon his foolishness!”

Fully set on carrying out his genius plan, Kanon kicked his horse.

“Where are you heading, Inquisitor?”

“Don’t worry! I’ll be back soon with the Demon King’s head!”

Kanon said as if he were off to take his afternoon stroll.

“That’s the entire point of our operation!”

Kanemitsu shouted while frantically trying to catch up to him.

“Just watch, Toshisaka. I’ll be back before you know it.”

His eyes ominously lit up under his helmet, and his mouth curled into a foreboding smile.

“Open the dam! Let the water thwart the cavalry!”

Following Jamka’s order, they opened the dam. Water rushed through the entire battlefield in mere moments. That was the reason he’d chosen their current location as the battlefield.
Althos’ waterway spanned the entire field. Furthermore, the soil was cultivated specifically to hold high quantities of water. As such, when the water was released, the soil transformed into a clay-like substance. In mere moments, the already exhausted horses came to a halt as their hooves sank deep into the sticky mud. Just as Jamka had predicted, Eshantel’s cavalry was considerably weakened by their move.

“Haah... Geez, where are you at a time like this, Al!?”

As the attack died down, Jamka finally found a small window to let off some steam. A few hours had passed since the start of the battle. They had hardened their defenses, but the sounds of the battle still raged on. Eshantel’s reckless attack continued as the clanking of heavy armor and clashing of swords reverberated through the field. Luckily, casualties were still zero, but Althos’ infirmary was filling up at an alarming rate.

“Oh my, I’m certain he’ll be back soon.”

Cecilia said ever so calmly, despite the beads of sweat rolling down her forehead as she desperately tried to treat the countless injured soldiers.

“If we continue to fall at this pace, our formation will be--”

A messenger rushed up to them.

“Reporting in! We spot a horseman blasting through the battlefield! We believe it is the Inquisitor!”

“All right, I guess it’s my time to shine!”

She crushed her empty bag of cookies and crudely wiped her mouth as she smiled dauntlessly.
She was ready to fight.

“Oh my, Sharon. I hope you remember your promise to Lesfina.”

Cecilia felt like it would’ve been better to pull Sharon back to reality before she got too invested in decimating her opponent.

“Of course I do! All I have to do is beat him to a pulp and have him apologize!”

Sharon answered, brimming with confidence. She wasn’t wrong, but...

“Anyway, just make sure to jump in there, do what you have to do, and come back, got it?”

Just like a certain young Inquisitor, Sharon, as carefree as ever, rode her horse into the fray.

“Oh my, stay safe!”

Cecilia said, smiling at the fiery Diva’s back.

“Did we... make it?”

Al tried to regain his composure from atop his neighing horse. After meeting up with Brusch and hearing about what was happening, Al left the surviving Eshantel citizens in her care. He, along with Feena, hopped on a horse and rushed back to Althos. When he arrived, he saw that the fight had already started, but it was far from over. Thanks to Jamka’s strategy, the battlefield had transformed into a muddy swamp. Eshantel’s cavalry were visibly disheartened. Most of them were, at least.

“Al, look!”

Al followed Feena’s finger, pointing at two figures engaged in battle.

“Now I feel like we were late.”

Off to the side of the main battlefield, the two figures clashed, creating a storm of dust and pebbles and transforming the landscape that had been unchanged for centuries.

“Hahaha! You again!? Be warned, I’m going all-out this time!”

“That’s what I wanted to hear! See if you can match me!”

They were as lighthearted as a girl making her rounds at a farmers’ market despite kicking up the ground to make one crater after another.

“Hahaha! This is what a real fight looks like!”

Kanon shouted excitedly.

“Of course! You’re fighting me, after all!”

Sharon raised her sword again as she said that. Seeing two Horsemen of the Apocalypse go at it, Al worriedly tapped his temple.

“Haaaaaaaah... I was gonna turn this place into a farm next moooonth!”

The battlefield had been reduced to a marsh, and the land next to it had more holes in it than Swiss cheese.

Just how much time and manpower will we have to dedicate to restore this disaster area!?

Tapping wasn’t enough anymore; he buried his face into his hands.

“All right! For now, let’s focus on stopping this madness! We can worry about the repairs later!”

He tried to escape his nightmare, or perhaps steeled himself to face it. Either way, in order to reach Sharon, they first had to cross Althos’ headquarters.

“Keep it up, Al! This is the last spurt!”

But Feena stole his opportunity to give a motivational speech.

“Hey! Don’t steal my thunder!”

Al shouted, without realizing he had a slight smirk on his face.

“Sorry for asking this after all you’ve been through today, but please help me for a little bit longer.”

With a gentle tap on the neck, his horse set off again. Then, he shouted toward the soldiers desperately trying to defend against what seemed like an incoming threat.

“It’s me, Alnoa! We don’t have time to talk; let me through!”

They quickly passed between the panicking soldiers.

“Hey, Al! At least say hello if you’re back! I have a lot to tell you!

Jamka shouted.

“Sorry, Jamka, we don’t have time right now. We’ll talk later!”

But he was completely disregarded. They flew through the headquarters like an arrow, and rushed directly at the feuding Divas.

“I won’t let you pass!”

One of Eshantel’s horsemen was charging toward Al and Feena with his katana drawn. Al couldn’t see the attacker’s face behind their helmet, but he recalled that the voice belonged to Kanemitsu.

“Sorry, but we’re in a hurry! We will get through!”

Al took his scythe from his back, ready for a fight.

“You will try!”

Kanemitsu charged in head first, let go of the bridle, and attacked with both hands gripping the katana.

“Rahhhh!”

“Arghhh!”

A moment after the two horses passed each other...

“Begone!”

crrrrk!

Kanemitsu froze after he was hit by Feena's spell.

"I mean, thanks, but... I wanted to show off..."

Al sulked as he passed the warrior who was quite literally frozen in place.

"We don't have time. Hurry!"

Feena exclaimed.

"Sorry! I promise we'll melt you later!"

Al apologized as he rode off into the distance.

"Incredible..."

Al babbled as he watched the battle between the two Divas.

"Haaaaaa!"

Sharon swung her sword sideways from behind the curtain of dust.

"Arghhhh!"

Kanon fended off her attack with an overhead swing. If Sharon was a raging tornado, then Kanon was a fearless lightning strike blasting through it. Basically, they both amounted to a disaster for normal people.

"Now, how do we stop this...?"

As Al dismounted, he lamented over their last clash.

"Huh? Feena!?"

Meanwhile, Feena was already off her horse and on her way to the center of the commotion.

"Kanon! I'm here! Listen to me!"

She shouted, but her voice couldn't conquer the wild clashing of swords.

"Ugh... Listen to me!"

They were too caught up in the fight to hear her, so she looked up at the sky and started murmuring something.

"Feena you can't! Stoppp!"

She disregarded Al's pleas and continued the chant.

“Crap! Come on!”

He tried to rush in and cover her mouth, but…

“Meteor Fall!”

He was too late. Al looked at the bright flash lighting up the sky, despair spreading over his face.
The flash expanded, and a moment later, a meteor the size of a small house appeared out of nowhere, along with an ominous rumbling sound.

“This might be a bit too much...”

“‘MIGHT’!? What, you want to blow up the whole country now!?”

Feena calmly turned to face the fuming Al.

“Don’t worry, they see it coming.”

“So what!? That won’t make it disappear!”

He looked at the warring Divas.

“What now!? We were getting warmed up!”

At last, Sharon looked up at the falling mountain. There was a cheeky glint in her eyes...

“Hah! Get this pebble out of here!”

You’ve gotta be kidding me...

Sharon angled her body, positioning herself in the direction of the meteor.

“I want to get back to our brawl, so do you mind if I help?”

Kanon joined her as well. He sheathed his sword and got ready to strike.

“Hmph. Do whatever you want.”

She said apathetically, but her eyes were twinkling with excitement. After a quick nod, they focused on the meteor above them. A moment later...

“Haaaaaa!”

Sharon split the meteor right down the middle with a single horizontal strike.

“Arghhhhh!”

Kanon struck down on the split meteor with a lightning-fast slash. The meteor was reduced to mere pebbles, which rained down on the dry ground as the sun once again shined down on them in all its glory.

“Not bad at all!”

“You’re pretty good yourself!”

Looking at the result of their effortless victory, they both let out a small chuckle. They had been at each other’s throats just moments before, but they were acting like old friends.

“Hmph! Teaming up is cheating! But that’s okay, I’ll just make a bigger one!”

“Do not! All we wanted was to make them stop this madness, not to introduce a third opponent!”

Sharon finally seemed to become aware of Al’s presence.

“Oh, Al, you’re back? Sorry, I didn’t realize. You should try speaking up next time or something.”

And she immediately broke his heart.

“Feena! Sorry I couldn’t keep our promise...”

“It’s okay. I made it in time.”

“Ah, and the peon! Did you get a haircut?”

“A haircut!? It’s my mustache that’s missing!”

Are you saying I’d have been fine even without that stupid mustache!? Plus, what’s with this calm reunion? Shouldn’t we be fighting!?

“Pffft... Peon... That’s rich. Can I call you that too?”

I’ll have to have a serious talk with her once this whole thing’s over.

While staring at Sharon, Kanon’s eyes popped wide open.

“Oh, Sharon, you know Alfonz?”

Al was still confused as to why those two were acting like old acquaintances, but unraveling that mystery would have to wait. Kanon’s question was really bad news, as Sharon had no idea about their plans.

“Hm? Who’s Alfonz? He’s--”

“L-Lady Sharon, what a coincidence! I have humbly come to--”

“What with that humble nonsense!? You’re Althos’ king, so talk like it! Y’know, like a king!”

Their cover went up in crimson flames.

“He’s Althos’... king?”

“Duh! He’s Alnoa, the king of Althos! What, you didn’t know?”

Sharon was laughing heartily despite Kanon’s foreboding words and Al’s colorless face.

Yeah, we’re definitely having a talk.

Even before Al could direct his scornful gaze at Sharon...

“King of Althos... Demon King... Prepare to die!”

Kanon’s bloodlust spread throughout the field.

“I can feel it, Al. He’s under a spell.”

“Rahhhhh!”

Completely ignoring Feena, Kanon charged at Al.

“So fast!”

He was sent flying without any time to draw his scythe.

“Ah! Al!”

Al only realized what had transpired a moment later. The blade had hit him from the side with so much force that his clothes were in tatters.

“I’m fine! Divas can’t-- Ah!”

A small dagger fell from his tattered clothes.

“Is that...”

Kanon recognized the dagger the instant he saw it.

“This is Toshisaka’s... Did you... Did you kill him!? Did you kill Toshisaka!?”

“No! With his last ounce of strength, he gave it to me and asked me to return it to you!”

“Don’t lie to me, you heartless Demon King bastard!”

The hatred seeping through every pore in his body was practically visible. Despite being completely unaware of the circumstances, Sharon reflexively jumped in front of Al.

“What are you thinking!? You may be strong, but I’m much stronger! You want to fight me alongside Feena, who’s also a Diva and, umm... Al, who I guess is useful every once in a blue moon!?”

I swear, she’s not gonna hear the end of this!

Al vowed to set things straight with her once they’d finished their mission. That being said, she wasn’t wrong. The three of them should have been able to triumph effortlessly. At least on paper. But Kanon’s bloodlust hadn’t waned one bit. On the contrary, it had gotten even thicker.
And then...

“I’m sorry, Toshisaka... I-I’ll... I’ll slaughter every single citizen of Althos to avenge you!”

Kanon was holding a dark-green crystal.

“Wait, is that...?”

It looked like the crystal that had turned Jamka into an abomination.

“I promise! I will slaughter everyone!”

“Kanon, stop!”

Not even Feena’s voice could pierce Kanon’s rage.

“O almighty Valkyrie dormant within me! Accept this humble body as a sacrifice and smite thy enemy, the heinous Demon King!”

Kanon slammed the crystal against the breastplate of his armor. But the crystal didn’t shatter. Instead, it passed through his armor without any resistance...

“Grrrgh! Gwaaaaaah!”

As Kanon kneeled down, the crystal was absorbed into his body. Feena leered at the pain-ridden Kanon with hints of water flickering in the corner of her eyes, while Sharon went on the defensive.

“Ahhh... Gahhh... Fwaahhh!”

Then, he stood up as if nothing had happened. He hadn’t transformed like Jamka, but his arms were dangling at his sides. His lifeless eyes twinkled from deep within his helmet, and a strange magical energy covered his body.

“Kanon... What have you done...?”

Kanon’s hand ever so slightly flinched at the blue-haired girl approaching him in a daze.

“Eh!?”

In a blink of an eye, Kanon stood before Feena, ready to strike her down. She had no time to react as he swung his katana at a blinding speed.

clang!

He connected with a peerless swing that would cut anyone cleanly in half.

“Sharon... Why...?”

The one who suffered that devastating blow was Sharon, who’d jumped in front of the blade in the last moment.

“Tch... Have you not yet realized-- Aghhh!”

Sharon fell to one knee, her face distorted in pain. There was a cut running straight from her hip all the way up her back, with fresh blood spilling out of it.

“Hey, Sharon!”

“Run! I can’t hold him back like this!”

She pushed Feena toward Al, keeping up her facade of strength even though she was badly injured. Their situation was certainly dire. Al hugged Feena as he took his scythe off his back.

“Sharon, let’s fall back! Reinforcements should be-- Ah!”

He felt something. The girl in his arms was looking at him with eyes full of

determination.

“Anhh... Al, I-- Ahhh... I want to help... Hahhh... Sharon and... Anhhhh! And Kanon...”

Signaled by Feena’s cheeks rapidly turning scarlet, Heavenly Surge had activated. Looking into her brave eyes, Al made his decision.

“Got it. I want to help them too, so I’ll be borrowing your strength!”

Al hugged her tiny body as gently as he could while still being firm.

“Sorry for doing this in the middle of a dead farmland with soldiers fighting as a backdrop.”

It seemed as though Al had really taken it to heart.

“I told you, I’m ready for you at anytime, anywhere.”

But Feena just hugged him tightly. She gently put her hand on Al’s and slowly led him down her back, before moving his hand under her skirt.

“Huh? Feena, what the--!?”

What she did wasn’t on the long list of things Al had been prepared for. He was perplexed--no, straight up unsettled by Feena’s sudden actions.

“I offer you everything I have.”

She let Al experience firsthand the secrets her panties had kept hidden for so long.

“Why...?”

“Because... my breasts wouldn’t fit in your hands.”

Al was speechless,
but...

“Al...”

The flustered girl looked up at Al and closed her eyes.

“Ahhh! All right, whatever!”

“Anhh♥”

Al directed all his magical energy into his hands as he groped Feena's soft, plump bottom.

"Feena..."

Feena's soft, rosy lips met his.

"Hahhh! You're... grabbing my... I'm getting stronger!? Ah... Ahhhhh!!!"

Just like what happened with Sharon, Feena's voice reverberated in his mind as he felt mana escaping his body.

"Ah! Ahhh! I'm gonna bweak! Al, it's too much! I'm gonna bweaaaak!"

Feena shouted, though whether it was due to either the pleasure or the overflowing magical energy was unknown.
Then, Al...

"Wow... This much more intense than last time. Is this really-- Ah... Rahhhhh!"

Their bodies were enveloped in pleasure and mana.

bang!

Al's scythe began to glow and his body was overflowing with mana.

"Mistilteinn..."

As if Mistilteinn understood his feelings, the scythe's blade happily shook in response to Al's whisper.

"Al..."

He looked in front on him.

"This is Caduceus."

She proudly presented her wand. Her simple relic with a blue orb at the tip had transformed into a beautiful, elaborate wand. Its tip branched out into a crescent moon-shaped crystal pulsating with an icy blue light.

"Demon King... found...! DEMON KIIIIIING!"

But they didn't have time to admire its beauty.

"Feena, take Sharon to Cecilia! I'll deal with Kanon!"

“What!? Just run--”

Al raised his hand to interrupt Sharon.

“Al?”

Feena was perplexed by his actions as well. Even though they’d performed Heavenly Surge, their opponent was still Kanon, the only person in the world whose strength matched that of a Diva. And to make matters worse, his incredible strength had been further amplified by that mysterious crystal. His attacks were not only lightning fast, they were also powerful beyond belief.

“Just do as I say! Get Sharon out of here!”

Al thrust his scythe toward Feena as he gave his order.

clanggg!

A katana struck Al’s scythe.

“RAHHHHH! DIEEE!”

Behind it was Kanon, screaming like a frenzied beast.

“Did he just... attack me?”

“No, he’s completely lost i--”

Just as Al began his explanation, Kanon flinched before unleashing a flurry of attacks.

“S-So fast...”

Al somehow managed to fend them off, though.

“Tch. Feena, fall back!”

Sharon muttered, seemingly worried.

“But...”

“Can you seriously have a life-or-death battle with Kanon?”

“Uhhh...”

She couldn’t give an answer.

“Thought so. We can’t keep holding him back like this! We have to go back to

Cecilia, get healed, and rush back to help!”

Sharon made up her mind and began to flee the scene.

“Al...”

Even in the midst of fending off Kanon’s relentless attacks, Al was able to calm Feena’s heart.

“Don’t worry. I swear I’ll save him.”

He said with a confident smile.

“Okay. I’ll leave it to you.”

Feena bowed, entrusting her mission to Al.

“Tch! Don’t you dare lose, Al!”

Bitter about how feeble she was, Sharon shouted at Al before escaping to the headquarters.
Feena followed after her, offering her shoulder to the limping girl.

“Huh? Now you want to come along?”

Sharon asked teasingly, surprised by Feena’s sudden change of heart.

“Thank you, Sharon.”

Feena said in the tiniest of whispers.

“What are you thanking me for!? I couldn’t do a thing after Kanon attacked me...”

Sharon confessed resentfully.

“But you kept our promise and came to help, so... Thank you.”

“Wh-What’s with you? Geez...”

Sharon clumsily averted her gaze.

“You feel different, like something’s changed about you. You’ve become much more talkative, too... Ah! Did you do something with Al on your trip!?”

She stared at Feena with her eyes wide open.

“Ah, wait, no... I’m not trying to pry or anything...”

Embarrassed by her own thoughts, she stumbled over her words.

“Why? What do you think happened during our trip?”

Feena asked with a tiny smile.

“Anyway, we have to get back and have Cecilia help us.”

“Hey, answer my question!”

“We’ll do that later! Hurry!”

Their quarrel continued until they reached the headquarters.

“Sorry about that. So, you ready?”

After confirming that the girls were at a safe distance, Al parried one last attack before jumping backward.

“GRRRRR! DIE, DEMON KING!”

He could feel Kanon’s mad stare piercing his skull. Al was shaking, but curiously--even for him--not because of fear. He was ecstatic about the impending fight.

Is this because of Heavenly Surge, or could it be...

He shook his head as if trying to get rid of his thoughts.

“I have to focus on saving Kanon.”

Al said with a wry smile. He had a plan in mind, but it was so reckless that Feena would never in a million years approve it.

“There’s only one way to do this!”

Al adjusted his grip on Mistilteinn...

“Here we go, Kanon!”

And charged toward his enemy.

“Aaaarghh!”

As if answering a challenge, Kanon also charged in, destroying the ground beneath his feet.

clang!

Sparks flew through the air, and not just because of the tension between them. But behind the sparks, Kanon had disappeared.

“There!”

Another shower of sparks danced between them. Finally able to perceive Kanon’s attacks,
Al clashed with him a couple more times. He’d mastered his defense, but...

“I can’t win by parrying!”

Al steeled his heart and got ready to attack.

shnk!

“Gahhhh!”

Kanon’s sword peeked out behind Al, at his side. He should’ve been done for, but this was part of his plan. He braced himself for the impact, and...

“Caught you!”

Al lifted his scythe.

“Hahhh!”

Kanon reflexively jumped back, avoiding the fatal strike by a hair’s breadth.

“How can you move so freely in that armor!?”

Still on edge, Al quickly tapped his side and blew out all the pent-up air in his lungs.

This is...

Al stole a glance at Mistilteinn. Because of Heavenly Surge, mana was quite literally seeping from Al’s pores. He’d have gone berserk if he weren’t consciously working to contain it. With such strength coursing through his veins, his previous attack would’ve assured his victory if he’d had a better grip on his weapon.

I have to say, my second time with Heavenly Surge is much different...

Kanon’s strikes were painful as hell, but they weren’t fatal. Though that didn’t shield him from all the damage.

“I guess this’ll be a battle of endurance, huh?”

Al’s scythe roared as it swung toward Kanon.

“What is... this...?”

After Cecilia was more or less done, Feena and Sharon regrouped with Al. Both armies were extremely exhausted, but the battle was still raging on. However, the moment they got Kanon back, the battle would be over.

“Al... What the hell are you doing?”

Sharon murmured when she saw the brutal scene in front of her.

“Ah, Sharon! Don’t worry, I’ll get him soon!”

Al was drenched in sweat. There wasn’t a single scratch on his body, but the sheer amount of sweat his body had produced was certainly not natural.

“Are you--”

“GRAHHHH!”

Completely overshadowing Sharon’s voice, Kanon struck down once again.

“Gahh!”

It was a clean hit on Al’s defenseless shoulder.

“Aaaaaah!”

Then, in the blink of an eye, Al raised his scythe and slashed at Kanon. By the time his scythe had completed its arc, Kanon was nowhere near it.

“Are you... trading blows?”

“Cut the crap! You’ll collapse--”

“Don’t worry! Heavenly Surge keeps me fueled, and about once every five swings I can land a hit!”

“But your stamina...”

Feena instantly spotted Al’s single weakness.

“Al, I’m going in!”

Sharon unsheathed her sword, ready to charge.

“No! I’ll be the one to save Kanon! It might be silly, it might be selfish, but Toshisaka trusted ME with saving his friend, and I’ll be damned if I don’t carry out his last wish!”

Al no longer cared if he was seen as a selfish brat. All he wanted was to fulfill his promise, and because of that...

“Then... I’ll be watching you.”

A stern yet graceful voice fell over the battlefield. Al glanced over to see Feena staring at him, grasping the sides of her dress.

“I’ll be watching, so go save Kanon!”

Feena bit her lip in both frustration and anticipation.

“All right, all right. I don’t know what’s going on, but I’ll stay back and watch. You’d better finish this quickly, got it!?”

Sharon said as she sheathed her weapon.

“Thanks. I’ll finish this with the next blow!”

Even though he didn’t seem to have suffered any injuries, his body was reaching its limit. Despite that, he once again fixed his grip, and...

“Come, Kanon! Come at me with all you’ve got!”

Al got ready to attack.

“It’s time to finish this once and for all! O Scythe of the Demon King, lend me your strength!”

“RAHHHH! DIE, DEMON KING!”

They both charged at the same time.

“Urrraaaaaah!”

Kanon deflected Al’s strike with his blade. He’d managed to knock off Kanon’s helmet, but it left him completely defenseless in the middle of his jump. He tried to readjust his grip as quickly as he could, but Kanon was quicker.

“I won’t lose here!”

Al gave up on defense and thrust his right arm forward. In order to deflect

Kanon's strike, he aimed a spell at his armor.

"Come forth, Demon Flames!"

He had hoped that the spell would bounce off Kanon's armor and alter his strike's trajectory, but his plan failed
because...

fwoosh! crackkk!

Instead of being repelled, the spell instantly destroyed his armor.

"AAAAH... AAAAAH! MY ARMOR!"

Kanon said, unable to move due to the shock. Al finally had the perfect opportunity to put an end to the mayhem, but he was frozen in place as well. Al had never seen Kanon without armor before. He had an awfully slender waist for a man; not to mention his curved bottom and beautiful, spotless skin. His chest had two bumps that looked less like pecs and more like small fruits.

"Wait... You're not a man, you're a Di--"

"URAHHHHHH!"

Unfortunately, Al didn't have the time to confirm his suspicions. Armored or not, Kanon continued charging furiously. While Al was standing dumbfounded, Kanon launched her attack.
He knew he couldn't dodge in time, so he prepared himself to take the attack aimed right at his head. A moment later...

"Inquisitor Kanon!"

There was a faint, yet somehow clearly audible voice.

"RAHHH!"

Kanon froze when he heard it.

"Toshi...saka?"

She said, her lips shaking.

"Uraaaaaaah!"

The next moment, Al's scythe mercilessly struck the defenseless girl.

shatter!

Al scythe sank into her chest and destroyed the ominous crystal nested deep within her.

“Aaaah... Toshi...saka...”

She collapsed with a tiny whisper. It was over. Looking at the motionless girl, Al was overrun by exhaustion and dropped to his knees.

“Are those voices?”

The answer entered his field of vision.

“Inquisitor! We’re fine!”

“It was the Empire! They attacked us with some strange creatures; Althos has nothing to do with it!”

“This war is meaningless! Drop your weapons!”

Eshantel’s citizens flooded the battlefield, shouting at their troops.

“It’s the... citizens?”

It didn’t sit right with Al. He could’ve sworn it had been Toshisaka...

“Well, whatever. That doesn’t really matter.”

But he was too tired to worry about it.

thud

“Wh-What’s this...”

Unable to hold himself up any longer, Al fell to the ground. All of his stamina was gone, to the point where he couldn’t move so much as a finger.

“Are you okay!?”

“Is this Heavenly Surge...?”

Al gave up on fighting the exhaustion and just blankly stared at the open skies above him.

“The same happened with us, but... Feena, how are you still okay?”

“Maybe the spell is still active and Al simply ran out of strength...”

Al couldn’t even open his mouth to voice his opinion.

“Anyway, we have to take him to Miss Cecilia!”

“Yeah. With Kanon defeated, the war is--”

Just as they went to help Al up...

“Aaaaah!”

A roar swept through the battlefield.

“The Empire! The Empire’s coming!”

A tense shout confirmed the situation.

“Why now...?”

“Th-They were probably waiting until... both armies were exhausted...”

Al still couldn’t move, but he somehow managed to force that sentence out.

“Sharon, I know you’re tired, but... please take Kanon to Jamka and... tell him to retreat while covering Eshantel’s troops.”

Al was giving his all to overcome his exhaustion.

“Why do you say that!? You’re in much worse shape than me, so why are you still trying to save us!?”

Kanon seemed to have woken up, and she didn’t like what she’d heard. Since Al was unable to move, he shouted toward the sky.

“Shut up! It’s just how I do things! Sharon, Feena, seeing as thick skulls are apparently common in Eshantel, you are authorized to use any and all methods you deem necessary to make them retreat!”

They both looked at Al, and...

“I sort of understand what you’re saying, but... No.”

“I agree. I--no, we are Divas!”

“Huh? What the hell are you--”

As they looked at Al with their heads tilted...

“We won’t be running away from some Imperial dogs.”

“We’ll make them run from us!”

They looked at each other and laughed.

“Finally, something we can agree on!”

“Don’t worry... It won’t happen again.”

“So, we’ll take our leave and wreak some havoc! Oh, and I’ll be sure to pop into the tent to inform Cecilia!”

“You two wait here, understood?”

“Hey now...”

With his last ounce of strength, Al lifted his head to watch the two girls leave.

“Wahahaha! All troops, advance! Slaughter everyone in sight!”

The Empire’s commander, Bouda, was ecstatic, as the time he’d been waiting for had finally arrived.

Their plan, once Althos and Eshantel had expended their resources, was to march in with their crushing forty-five hundred soldiers. It was a simple plan that anyone could execute. And even Inquisitor Kanon, Eshantel’s ace in the hole, was unconscious. Bouda had assumed that the Divas were extremely fatigued after their battle with Kanon, so he ordered the attack without checking the battlefield.

“I get to slaughter the remnants of Eshantel, occupy Althos, and capture multiple Divas! This is my ticket to becoming a lieutenant!”

He was assigned this task from the get-go, but he had been doubtful about its success.

“Mwahaha! The gods have truly blessed us!”

Bouda happily rode his horse through mud and dirt while following his troops, an action unbefitting of a commanding officer. Unfortunately for him, those happy dreams were rather short-lived.

“Huh? What’s that?”

Two people stood before the entire Imperial army.

“Messengers sent to deliver their surrender? Hah, who cares? Trample them!”

Upon receiving Bouda’s ignorant order, his troops rushed toward the supposed messengers. He looked around to admire the bloodshed and scattered remains of the fools who dared to stand before the mighty Empire...

“Haaaaaa!”

A violent yet dignified scream cut through the battlefield.

wham!

The ground beneath them shook, causing Bouda to reflexively close his eyes.

“Wh-What the hell!?”

He opened his eyes to a violent scene. His troops were getting cut down by a red-haired girl, expertly juggling a longsword...

“Flame Beast! Thunder Beast! Water Beast! And lastly, Ice Beast! Destroy them!”

Elemental beasts rampaged through his troops, setting some on fire and freezing others. Behind them, a blue-haired girl unleashed one spell after another with a seemingly endless supply of mana. His troops, along with his dreams of promotion, were being annihilated by those two.

“Hey, Feena! Leave some for me, too!”

Sharon said, cutting down one enemy after another.

“But it’s my time to shine!”

Feena was simply having her own share of fun.

“Hey now!”

They began to quarrel, pulling the unlucky Imperial soldiers in with them.

“Who the hell are those two?”

Bouda whispered. Little did he know that he’d just witnessed the beginning of the end.

“Why are you helping me--us?”

A few minutes after the two Divas left, Kanon finally managed to get up from the ground. She walked up to the motionless Al and sat next to him.

“Hey, I hope you’re planning to drop the whole ‘punching and headbutting’ thing for today!”

Al said jokingly.

“Hahaha, don’t worry. I accept my defeat... But now, I’d be happy to hear an answer.”

She replied with a smile. Seeing her pure, adorable smile for the first time, Al’s heart skipped a beat.

“Don’t get me wrong, I’m not doing this for you! I, umm... My dream is to create a country where everyone can smile!”

In that brief moment of bliss, Al shared his dream.

“Hmm... Your dream, huh...?”

Kanon gazed at him in wonder. Seeing her without armor confirmed that she was without a doubt a Diva. Her pure beauty rivaled that of the others; she had smooth, spotless skin,
purple eyes that were honest and calming and beautiful, silky, long light-purple hair that she’d somehow kept tucked away in her helmet.

“Hmm, interesting... Do you think something like that is even possible?”

She asked while tilting her head. It was an honest question from someone who had lost their entire country, but for Al, it was as if she were denying his very being.

“Who cares if it’s possible or not!? I’ll make it possible, and I’ll mow down anyone who dares to oppose me, even you!”

Al exclaimed while still completely paralyzed. It was too late when he realized his grave mistake.
Kanon was visibly shaken by his wild declaration.

“Eep! He not only defeated me in a fair duel, but his sheer willpower is...! Nhhh!”

Huh? Did she just “Nhhh”?

It was a whisper, quiet as an evening breeze, but Al heard it loud and clear. Not only that, but he was subjected to what felt like a lascivious leer as Kanon’s breasts shook, asserting their dominance before his eyes. Unable to move, Al was in quite the pinch.

“What’s the problem, Kanon!? Are you okay?”

Al was concerned because of her sudden change of demeanor.

“I myself have a dream. A wish, if you will.”

Even her manner of speech had changed considerably.

“Which would be...?”

Kanon continued talking without paying much heed to Al. Strangely, her cheeks were getting flushed, which set off warning signals all through his mind. Rightly so, as...

smoosh.

Without any means of escape, Al had no choice but to endure Kanon’s chest pressing against his own as she leaned on him.

“H-Hey, what are you doing!?”

It seemed like Kanon’s personality had done a complete one-eighty, as she was looking at him with steamy eyes.

“I’ve made my choice. I’m going to marry you!”

Where did this come from!? What lead to this decision!?



These questions ran through Al's mind until he felt Kanon's warm breath on his cheek. Despite how reckless their fight had been, Kanon's scent was as pleasant as a field of flowers after the rain. She was an enticing Diva, no question about it.

"I pretended to be a man because my father didn't want me to marry anyone. Out of love for my dear, all-powerful father, I decided I'd marry the first person who could best me in a duel..."

His current, rather dangerous predicament reminded him of the incident with a certain succubus. Kanon was mounted on top of him, staring into his eyes with an inescapable gaze as her breasts gently massaged his chest every time she moved.

"And you have bested me."

Her gaze became even more unbearable.

"B-But I just got lucky. Besides, I have the Demon King's power and all...!"

Al tried desperately to reroute the discussion.

"Please, you don't need to be so humble! Imagine a child born from the love between a Diva and the Demon King! Don't you think they'd be unbeatable!?"

"No I do not! Don't just deny everything the Valkyrie blessed our world with!"

"Ah! But you'll have to take my name before we start rebuilding Eshantel!"

"Hey, haven't you gotten a bit too needy since we found out you're a girl? I'd like to ask you to listen to me once in a while, but you're a Diva, so I don't see that happening..."

He had wanted to resolve this calmly, but that hadn't exactly worked out.

"Ahhh... I can't... Those bold words, those fiery eyes..."

She wrapped her arms around herself and began writhing on top of Al, leaving him very confused.

"Squee! Wonderful! How manly! Now I know why Toshisaka entrusted you with that mission!"

As she ran her fingers along Toshisaka's memento, she dropped her gaze to

Al’s lower half.

“Oh? What’s this~?”

She noticed a bulge in Al’s pants. Al’s entire life flashed before his eyes as he cursed the only part of his body that wasn’t paralyzed.

“Th-This is a completely normal biological reaction!”

As he was trying to explain himself, a strong stimulus ran through his entire body. As it happened, what Kanon was stroking wasn’t Toshisaka’s memento but the other dagger Al had on his person.

“Ahahaha... Men are fascinating... Or maybe you’re the fascinating one.”

Al’s mind was sent into orbit as Kanon, the very person he’d assumed for so long to be a man, sensually traced the bulge in his pants with a cheeky, teasing, yet charming smile.

“Y’know, I never thought I’d get a man so excited...”

She said with a smile that could captivate any man and conquer any king.

“Now then, no more beating around the bush. Let’s exchange vows!”

“I’d much rather keep beating around the bush!”

She leaned even closer, still stroking Al’s ever-growing bulge.

“Aaaaaaaaah!”

They heard a shout from nearby.

“Tch, we were just getting to the fun part!”

Al knew as soon as he looked over that the shout had come from an Imperial soldier looking to capture the injured King and the Diva. Strangely, he felt the need to thank his unusual savior.

“Kanon, run! I’ll be fine.”

He at least wanted to make sure that Kanon was safe, but she showed no sign of leaving.
Instead...

“Hahaha! I suppose I’ll protect you, but first...”

She suddenly kissed him.

Again!?

As their desires to protect each other intertwined, Heavenly Surge activated once more. This time, however, Al's mana entered Kanon's body through an... undisclosed location.

"Ehh? Ahhh, nhhh... I-I'm so hot! Is this what a woman's pleasure feels like!?"

They were swimming in mana and pleasure.

boom!

Al's scythe lit up and his body was completely overtaken by mana.

"We meet again, Mistilteinn."

Al stood up and greeted his trusty scythe.

"Al, look, look! My katana!"

He looked at the source of the overly excited voice.

"Welcome... Byakuya."

The sword, twice as long as before, was black as night; only its blade twinkled white as the purest silver. Seeing her reformed relic, she quietly murmured.

"Ahaha, what a wonderful wedding gift!"

The girl happily swung the sword, longer than she was tall.

"Hey now, we never agreed to get married, did we?"

"Wait here, dear. Let me take out the trash before our ceremony!"

"Listen to me fo-- Oh, whatever, just try not to kill them!"

Kanon raised her hand to signal she'd heard him loud and clear as she blasted off toward the Imperial soldiers.

"Wh-What should I do?"

The victor had already been decided. Althos and Eshantel should've been wiped from the face of the continent. What had gone wrong? According to the reports, two Divas, alongside none other than Eshantel's own Diva, wreaked

havoc over the Empire's forces and were on their way to his very position.

What do I do now? Should I retreat and try to regroup? Do we push further in, relying on our numbers?

But right behind the crumbling novice commander...

"Oh my, are they already fighting?"

"Wh-Who's the--"

Bouda was completely speechless. Behind him was a blonde, blue-eyed goddess wearing white ceremonial robes.

"Wh-Who... are you...?"

The smiling goddess wouldn't so much answer the completely dumbstruck commander. She ominously looked him in the eyes, and...

"Oh my, now it's your turn. Strip."

"U-Understood!"

Charmed by the goddess' beauty, Bouda took off his equipment one piece after the other.
Then...

"Aaaaaaah! Wh-What are yo-- Aaaaaaaah!"

Just like that, the second Imperial commander fell victim to Cecilia of Althos.

"I see... So Toshisaka is..."

After the battle was over, Al shared Toshisaka's last moments with Kanon, who was paralyzed due to the aftereffects of Heavenly Surge. After a tiny nap to fight off her complete exhaustion, Kanon was back to her usual self. Al had finally regained his ability to move. Besides a bit of numbness here and there and a throbbing headache, he was back to normal. He was alone with Kanon, Sharon, and Feena. Jamka and Brusch were dealing with the post-battle operations, and Cecilia was treating the injured soldiers at the infirmary, which was marked by the enemy commander hanging from a stick in his underwear.

She's taken up a strange hobby, stripping enemy commanders down to their underwear.

Disregarding that thought, Al turned toward Kanon.

“If... If I could’ve stopped him, then maybe...”

“It’s not your fault. It’s all on me for being played by the Empire like a damn fiddle.”

She said it with bright--or rather, a refreshing smile, as if she’d set her mind on something.

“And you brought Toshisaka’s dagger to me to honor his last wish.”

Al, unable to bear her pure smile, averted his gaze and answered with a tiny nod. Kanon ran her fingers across the memento from Toshisaka.

“I appreciate what you did from the bottom of my heart, but I have one last favor to ask.”

She looked straight into Al’s eyes.

“Everything that happened between our countries is my responsibility. I personally gave out every order, so I would like you to pardon my troops. Of course, I’m willing to make reparations for the damages, even if it means... giving you my very self!”

thwack

Al flicked Kanon’s forehead.

“Ehh!? What? Why did you hit me? Is fighting all you men can do?”

“Take it as you wish!”

An unusually blunt response from Al.

“Is he mad?”

“No, he’s furious!”

Al heard Feena and Sharon’s small exchange and turned toward them.

“You bet I am! Toshisaka gave his life to protect her, and now she’s throwing herself away!”

Al aired his emotions, unfiltered.

“Then what should I do!? What’s the point of my existence without my

country, without Toshisaka!? Tell me!”

Kanon looked at Al with tears streaming down her cheeks seemingly endlessly.
But Al answered with a gentle smile.

“You can always rebuild your country. You still have all your troops, all the people you saved, and all your friends willing to lend a hand, don’t you?”

“My people... My friends...”

Kanon wiped her face and gave Feena a meek look, to which she nodded softly.

“Plus, we have a bunch of vacant houses and enough produce for everyone. If you don’t have anywhere to go, feel free to stay with us until you recover.”

He offered, regardless of the inevitable hour-long speech he’d get from Jamka.

“That means... this... This isn’t the end of me, of Eshantel...”

“Of course not. You can stay here, gather your people, recover, and go back whenever you want.”

Feena slowly walked up and hugged the weeping girl.

“Th-Thank you... and sorry, Feena... I caused so much trouble...”

Kanon returned the hug. Knowing that Kanon was a girl meant he had no reason to be jealous... Probably.

“This is great and all, but I’m starving here!”

Despite her complaints, Sharon was smiling.

“Have you calmed down?”

Minutes, or maybe hours later, Kanon had stopped weeping in Feena’s arms.

“Yes. Sorry, FeenaAAAAA!?”

Kanon’s meek expression was suddenly overtaken by terror as she looked up at Feena.

“Good. Then let’s hear your excuses.”

Her gentle face was long gone, replaced with a cold, dark stare reminiscent of the darkest of winter nights as she groped Kanon's chest.

"Huh? Feena! Let it up a-- Ouch! That hurts!"

Kanon struggled, but Feena's hold was unshakable.

"You told me you're a man. Was that a lie?"

"No! I did it for my fathe-- Ouch! Listen to-- Owowowowow! I didn't want to lieEEEEEEE!"

After torturing her for a bit, Feena finally let go of Kanon's breasts.

Hmph! You liar! Traitor!"

"Huh!? You just called me a friend!"

"I never said that. If you're staying in this country, either cut off those melons or stay out of my sight!"

The contradiction in her words was clear as day, but no one dared to speak out against them.

I see! She wore that armor to hide her breasts!

Al was visibly satisfied with his discovery, but Feena, who just happened to look back at him at the wrong time, was less so. She ran off, sulking.

"Feena, wait! Look, we can finally live together! Let's have a chat!"

With her grace on the battlefield having seemingly vanished into thin air, Kanon ran after Feena, desperately trying to get her attention.

"I want to be with Al... and no one else."

Her tiny whisper as she glanced back at Al was carried away by the wind.

"Hehehe. How wonderful, Demon King..."

Deep below the castle, in the darkest recess where only royalty can tread, stood a maid. She ever so slowly traced the indent in the giant door with her finger. In that indent laid a colossal scythe.

"They have released the second scythe... Hehehe, soon, My Lord. Very soon indeed..."

Her sadistic, bewitching smile shimmered through the darkness before she disappeared.

Epilogue

“I wonder, what really is Heavenly Surge?”

A few days after the incident, Al was in his quiet office, thinking to himself while sorting documents. He only knew a handful of things about the strange phenomenon known as Heavenly Surge. It would only activate if both the Demon King’s scythe and a Diva’s relic were present and if their emotions and goals matched, and that it caused issues and abnormalities in the body after its completion. Everything else about it was unclear. However, there were other mysterious things happening around him as well. Who was Gil, the person who’d brainwashed Kanon? What was that crystal? The Empire’s very attack had irregularities, as well. Al had too many questions and too little information. He buried his face into his arms in desperation when...

“We kissed, he saw me naked, and we cuddled! I am clearly his legal wife now.”

“How dare you!? No, I mean, I don’t want to marry him at all, but...! H-He saw me naked too, and umm... we... kissed...”

“Hah! You call that ribbon ploy ‘naked’? Don’t make me laugh! Besides, he asked me for a kiss himself! What’s that if not pure love!”

While Al was on the brink of insanity in pursuit of answers, the girls on the sofa were openly discussing his most embarrassing moments in recent memory.

Haah, why does it come to this every time?

Just when he decided to ignore their conversation, he spotted Kanon inching closer to him like a kitten expecting warm and cozy snuggles. After it became common knowledge that she was a girl, Kanon decided to swap her burly armor for a light-purple dress. Though it was hardly a voluntary decision, as Al himself had shattered said armor… Looking at the girl pleading to him with her eyes, Al took a small sip of tea...

“Al! Let’s have sex!”

“Pfwhhhhh!”

Which he proceeded to spray all over the room.

“Whoa, what was that? Are you practicing a facial?”

“cough, cough! Where did that come from!? No, wait, where did you learn that word!?”

Al shouted at Kanon while trying to fight off his coughing fit.

“Why? The head maid told me that to increase the population, we first need to make babies. She also said that I should be cuddling and snuggling you a lot since you’re the Demon King’s vessel.”

That damn succubus... Why does she have to complicate everything!?

“Plus, you’re not just any man. You’ve conquered me on the battlefield! You’re my owner, so why wouldn’t we have lots and lots of seEEEEEEEEX!”

Her calm voice suddenly transformed into a scream. Feena snuck up behind Kanon and violently groped her.

“You still have these flabby excuses for breasts!? Go back home and get rid of them!”

Al had a front row seat to watch Feena fondle Kanon, giving her breasts new shapes and forms. In essence, he was witnessing a lascivious display of lesbianism before averting his gaze.

“Ow ow ow ow! Feena! You’re why are you so cruel! And it hurts! Your cruelty hurtsss!”

Finally free from her restraints, Kanon complained, but...

“What was that, you squabbly pudding!?”

Feena grabbed her wand and started poking Kanon’s chest.

“Anhhh! Nooo, Feenaaaa!”

She protested, but only verbally.

“You two really do get along, don’tcha?”

Sharon murmured, but…

“Yes!” “Not at all...”

She got conflicting answers.

“Haah... Listen, I have to work, so get out.”

Al grew tired of the commotion, but...

slam!

His door suddenly flew open.

“Al! I finally finished it!”

Cecilia stood on the other side, smiling from ear to ear.

“Finished what?”

She arrived with an unusual excitement in her eyes.

“Oh my, you’d like to know, wouldn’t you? Should I tell you? All right, behold!”

She thrust a bundle of paper at him.
It was...

“A bill for allowing marriage between siblings, parents and children, and men and women of all ages!”

He flipped through the pages that were filled with signatures.

“I collected signatures from Eshantel’s newly moved-in warriors, as well as our longtime residents. Two-thirds of our population is in favor of this proposal, and as such, the bill has finally passed!”

She said proudly, but...

“Cecilia.”

Al said, followed by a deep sigh, to his gorgeous yet deplorable sister.

“Cecilia. The warriors are not our citizens; their signatures don’t count.”

He looked at her with eyes full of pity.

“That’s correct, but when I marry Al, our citizens wiLL--! Feena, stop with the poking!”

“B-But that’s... putting the cart before the horse!”

Cecilia broodingly lashed out at Kanon’s failure to spot the real issue with her plans.

“Anyway, it’s dismiss--”

“Excuse me, Your Highness. Visitors have arrived.”

Suddenly, Lilicia appeared in the doorway.

“Visitors? Who’d come here now?”

There weren’t any visits planned,
so he asked Lilicia.

“That would be a messenger of Freiya, and...”

“‘And’? There are more?”

Al was already concerned, but his jaw dropped the moment he heard the other visitor’s name.

End.

Afterword

Hello everyone, I'm Kouka Kishine, author of the Overlap Light Novel Competition's runner-up, "The Demon King and the Bride-to-Be Divas". I'm a complete and utter newcomer to the scene, even though that's probably not what you'd expect from someone my age. I got a bit carried away in the last volume and didn't have room for an Afterword, but now I have three whole pages to work with, so I took the opportunity to write one.

So, what should I talk about? I'm happy we managed to deliver the second volume of Battle Divas to everyone. Actually, this second volume means a lot to me as an author. You might be surprised to hear this, but this book is fresh out of the oven; I never actually wrote a sequel to the original story. It was the one and only volume I sent to the Overlap Light Novel Competition.
Of course, I'd fantasized about winning the competition and possibly publishing a sequel, but I never got around writing it. In a sense, this very book marks my first step as a professional author. I got the chance to go wild and think about what I'd like to do with the characters
I adore to pieces.

And to top it all off, the illustrator of the last volume returned for this one as well! I was moved to tears the first time I saw the new cover. How can anyone make such an incredible cover illustration?

I've really become a professional author, haven't I...? I can feel myself tearing up as a write this, so I'll put my pen down for today. Thank you. All of you, thank you.

Now, to change the topic a bit, my beloved Feena takes center stage in this volume! Of course, I love each and every one of my characters, but Feena has a special place in my heart. What will our stoic, blue-haired Diva do this time to win the heart of the love of her life? I don't want to go into spoilers, but let me just say that I had a ton of fun writing all the steamy, nosebleed-inducing scenes with her. Of course, you'll get a healthy dose of tsundere and bro-con too, as well as a brand-new Diva. I hope you're looking forward to it!

Let me take this opportunity to thank all the people who helped me along the way. Nekonabeao, thank you so much for your wonderful illustrations all throughout the book. Your newest cover with Feena is the bomb! I'll try my

best to write a story worthy of your glorious illustrations! Kimura Design Lab, thank you for the colorful, vivid, high-quality paper you allow my words to materialize on. To my editor, who I'm sure sometimes wanted to pull their hair out, thank you.

I'm sure this won't be the last time I give you a headache, but I'm hoping we can continue working together for a long time to come. And of course, to all the readers who have come this far, thank you. I'll do my best to learn and improve in order to be worthy of your precious attention.

Kouka Kishine, 09/2016



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