

### 63. A Beautiful Dance With Death

And so the nobles rose from their seats and mockingly gazed upon the mundanes below.

Danny and Cindy huddled together as they strained their necks to look up at their spectators; men and women in lavish clothing donning white masks grinned at the pair with predatory gazes from above.

Danny looked straight at Prince August, "A duel to the death? And the winner becomes enslaved? Ridiculous! We would never kill each other for your entertainment!"

Prince August sneered at Danny's speech, "Mundanes should respect the hierarchy and follow orders quietly..." Then, he waved his hand as if dismissing Danny like some animal; he casually turned around and perched himself on a stone throne, leaning his chin against his arm, displaying indifference.

Danny hugged Cindy tighter while glaring with hatred at the nobles, "You nobles and mages always think you are some kind of demigods walking on this mortal plane! What makes you any different from us *mundanes*?"

Marquess Cunningdal watched the drama with a bored mind; as a military man, he saw widespread destruction and death almost every day at the northern border between Kassinki and Oshal. So he would derive no pleasure watching two untrained mundanes brawling it out, except for the added twist that they are lovers; there was nothing else of interest for him.

Suddenly unusual dark energy manifesting itself within Cindy's mana circuit drew his attention. Oshal employed supervised necromancers, as the war was the perfect playground for their abilities, so he was well versed in the skills of necromancers.

Marquess Cunningdal looked around to find the culprit; he was surprised that nobody else seemed to notice the dark energy. All nobles are born with the ability to become mages. Some spoke of noble bloodlines; others claimed it was gods wish for them to rule over the populace. So if high-class mages surround him and none are reacting to the dark energies.

There is only one option. They know, and yet they choose to ignore it.

Marquess Cunningdal leaned forward with a newfound interest while searching around; the necromancer had to be somewhere inside this room and incredibly professional, potentially even an A grade due to the

lack of evidence. Although from his experience, Necromancy was tricky to track in the first place as it often manifested itself through delayed curses.

Danny continued his righteous speech about inequality, completely ignoring his wife's soulless eyes and bloodthirsty expression. Well, that was until he screamed as his wife clawed out his left eye with her nails.

Was it brutal? Yes. Had Marquess Cunningdal seen it before? Certainly. Instead, his entire focus was on the dark energies raging through Cindy's body and turning her into some kind of frenzied state, a handy skill for the battlefield, one he wished he could utilise. The ability to turn mundane cannon fodder into bloodthirsty savages that ignored pain would be a massive advantage in the upcoming war.

Marquess Cunningdal looked around again while debating his theories, *'Unfortunately, whoever the necromancer is, they are a part of the Prince's faction, aka the Council of White Masks.'*

The nobles cheered and began to place bets while leisurely sipping on aged red wine.

Danny and Cindy engaged in a brutal dance of death; initially, Cindy had the upper hand with her surprise attack on Danny's eye; Danny was also hesitant to attack Cindy as he tried to work out the situation. After a few minutes, Danny finally lost his patience, "You bitch!" he hollered.

A woman wearing a beautiful red dress reached within the bosom and extracted a dagger; she then casually let it drop right in front of the enraged Danny.

The nobles laughed as others retrieved weapons from hidden locations and dropped them in the arena below. Danny grabbed the weapon the red-dressed noble had so *kindly* provided him and rushed towards Cindy with untrained movements. He wildly swung the dagger-like an amateur, but due to Cindy's beserk state, she ignored the blade and tried to gorge out Danny's remaining eye.

Marquess Cunningdal couldn't care to watch the outcome; with a final slash, Danny stood over his decapitated wife and cried as he fell to his knees, causing sand to swirl around him.

Prince August stood up from his throne with light steps, glanced at the result and announced, "It appears we have a winner; Danny shall be sold to the highest bidder. Any offers?"

Silence.

Male slaves were unpopular and untrained mundanes even more so.

The lady in the red dress who previously dropped Danny a dagger let out a sigh and raised her finger, "One silver."

Danny just stared at the nobles that forced him to kill his wife and now were bidding for his life. Then, he laughed and laughed some more. Covered in his wife's blood, missing an eye and covered in deep wounds, he laughed like a maniac.

"Two silver."

"Three silver."

The more crazy and insane he became, the higher his worth to the nobles. They wanted to see if they could break him even more, perhaps use him in magic experiments. A depressed and dull slave with no skills was worthless, but an insane and broken man might provide a few minutes or hours of entertainment.

The bidding concluded at eleven silvers by the lady in the red dress.

Marquess Cunningdal watched in interest as the corpses of Cindy levitated in the air in front of Prince August. Dark energy surged out of his hand and wrapped itself around the corpse; the once decapitated body transformed into a black sludge within seconds.

This sludge was then collected in a crystal jar and floated over towards the lady who won the bid, "May your slave's wife provide you with longevity." Prince August said in a monotone voice as the lady accepted the jar.

The lady smiled, "I give my thanks to the Prince for this opportunity." She then looked towards the cavern's ceiling and poured the jar's contents onto her white mask.

The white mask greedily absorbed the sludge as it turned to skin colour and merged itself with the lady's face.

Marquess Cunningdal shuddered in his seat; he knew this after-party wouldn't be so simple as watching mundanes duel to the death. There had to be a more thrilling aspect. Otherwise, none of the nobles would have looked so excited to attend. He reached his hand to his own white mask and nervously traced his fingers across the surface; what was it made from, and was it safe to wear?

With the mask now gone, Marquess Cunningdal identified the lady as The third Princess of the Yaeldrin clan, a small but powerful clan of elves that reside in the southern forests.

Her face seemed refreshed with vitality; she had rosy pink cheeks and youthful features.

*'Those features don't match her age at all.'* Marquess Cunningdal pondered as he inspected her further, *'in fact, she looked different only a few hours ago at the garden party. Did she extend her life through consuming a dead body?'*

A butler with a white mask presented Danny to the Princess with a slave collar around his neck; it provides minor mind control and instilled a sense of loyalty, certainly not foolproof but works well enough on mundanes.

The Princess seemed happy with her purchase as she quickly made the almost dead man into a living stool as the stone steps provided little cushioning.

Marquess Cunningdal leaned back against the cold stone steps with a complicated mind, *'The Necromancer is the Prince, and he has a way to extend the life of his followers. Although nobles and mages like to pretend to be demigods, the one thing none of us can defeat is time. Well, except for the Dean, that old monster is human yet has lived for longer than the records of this Kingdom. But, unfortunately, nobody knows how, and he refuses to share his secrets.'*

*'This is certainly a weakness of the Prince, but he is showing it so openly to the nobles means he has powerful backers to defend him. Perhaps the one who taught him Necromancy? Maybe even the King condones his actions?'*

While lost in thought, the gates opened once more, and two new mundanes were pushed inside by white-masked butlers. Marquess Cunningdal paid the events little interest as watching mundanes slaughter each other was something he was used to watching and participating in personally.

He spent the time observing the noble's transformations after consuming the vitality from the slain mundanes with half interest; it was certainly an interesting application of Necromancy but nothing groundbreaking.

He almost drifted off to sleep until Prince August announced the final contestants, "For the grand finale, I shall have two of my maids fight to the death."

"Daughter of the late Head Professor, Evelyn shall duel..." he looked behind himself and pointed at a random maid standing by the door, "Kayla, I have been disappointed with your performance recently, so you shall duel Evelyn."

The terrified maid weakly nodded as a white-masked butler escorted her through the stone door.

Marquess Cunningdal stood up for the first time, walked towards the edge, and peered over.

And there she stood, his bastard brother's daughter.

Evelyn.