

Chapter 3 Part 2

2

The Valugan Empire, with its capital in Aldan, was the world's leading metropolis. Boasting a population exceeding 3,500,000, it was situated in the northern part of the Empire. Its coastal location had fostered bustling trade, led by the Crimea Trading Company, generating significant profits.

Aldan epitomized the growth befitting the capital of the Empire.

Due to its considerable distance from the southern Kingdom, travel by carriage took several days. While a quicker journey might have been possible by dragon mount, there was no urgent need to hasten the journey, so the carriage sufficed.

"Thank you for your hard work, Your Imperial Highness."

"Thank you. You must be tired, too?"

"No, I am fine."

Having stepped out of the carriage, we were greeted by the cityscape of Aldan. The city, with its many high-rise buildings featuring a unified and calming color palette, lined up impressively towards the Imperial Castle. The closer we got to the city's center, the more numerous the buildings became, leaving an overwhelming impression.

"This place is amazing... completely different from the Kingdom."

In my first life, I never had the chance to leisurely observe the cityscapes of the Empire.

I had no recollection of such magnificent cityscapes, as my focus had been solely on cutting down enemies in front of me.

"You're right. The architectural style of the Empire is distinct from that of the Kingdom. The Kingdom prioritizes beauty, while the Empire emphasizes functionality and fortification of cities. People who come here from the Kingdom often say it feels like stepping into another world."

"That makes sense now that you mention it."

As she said, the buildings of the Empire were made from robust materials, and the city walls surrounding it were tall and thick.

"The houses on the outskirts of the city use metal for their exterior walls, don't they?"

"Yes, the houses on the outskirts are particularly sturdy and resistant to fire."

—*I can strongly agree with her words on the emphasized fortification.*

"Aldan faces the sea, so the entrances to the city from the land are limited. In the past, the Imperial Army, cornered by allied forces led by the Kingdom's army, fought in Aldan as their last stronghold. It was thanks to the robust defense of this city that they were able to withstand the fierce attacks from the allied forces for seven months, despite being overwhelmingly outnumbered..."

The Empire's eventual defeat was a long process, with its Imperial Army having fought bravely and perished at this location. Princess Valtrune must have fought desperately to defend this place. Her profile seemed to host a complex mix of emotions, blending nostalgia and sadness.

"Your Imperial Highness."

"Mm?"

"This time, we will definitely protect it."

A past where the imperial capital had fallen did not exist in this world.

It was a bloodstained history from another world, etched only in her memories and mine.

—*I will not let a future that makes her sad come to pass.*

"Yes, you are right. This time, definitely!"

Princess Valtrune held my hand tightly.

It was warm, slender, and supple, yet at the same time, I could feel its strength. The thought of this beautiful hand being stained with blood and bearing the sorrow of many had made my chest ache.

Surely, that was the destiny bestowed upon her. But, I could lighten the burden she had to bear.

"I will support you—*only you*, as long as I live."

"In that case, I will rely on you without hesitation."

"Please leave it to me."

That was why the day to let go of this hand would never come.

I vowed to never let this city turn into a bloodstained battlefield again.

"We're going to look for people, right?"

"Yes, Aldia. I can't move around freely... so, I'm counting on you."

"Yes, as you wish."

I sincerely hoped from the bottom of my heart that this peace would continue to be maintained.