

Chapter 376:

While a battle of dismemberment and destruction—two versus many—was happening on the ground, an entirely different kind of fight was occurring in the air. An old elven man with a hunched back was standing steadily with a cane atop a cloud of sand, and across from him, another old man with ice wings sprouted from his shoulder blades had his body almost completely transformed into solid dark ice.

“Oh?” Marrick stared down the angry former king. “It seems you have better control over that skill than your father had back in the day. Isn’t that something? What was that? Two-hundred years ago? Give or take a decade or two?” He made sure to speak just loud enough so that his opponent could hear him. “You can hear, correct? I know your brain doesn’t work well as it is, but does it being frozen make you even dumber?”

“Yes, I can hear, you old codger!” The former king spat out in a muffled voice. “It’s your fault that father was the way he was with us. Now, I get to have my revenge.”

“Wait...” Marrick opened his eyes wide and blinked a few times. “You’re saying that your father treated you poorly because of me? That it was my fault that I didn’t die when he ambushed my granddaughter? That him barely making it out alive and losing most of his men against a single old elf was my fault? Boy, what kind of fantasy land do you live in?”

“If you would have just given him what he wanted, everything would have been fine! Instead, when he came back, he was more angry than ever, and he took it out on me and my siblings.” Traven clenched his icy jaw.

“Then it’s a good thing you killed him, isn’t it?” Marrick chuckled and when he saw the surprised look on the other man’s face—as surprised as an ice statue could look at least—he fell into a fit of laughter.

“What, you thought nobody knew? Your father dying of a fast acting mystery poison while in a dungeon, then, a couple decades later, your son is betrothed to the daughter of the matriarch of House Ireal. It doesn’t take much to put that together, boy. Your men and citizens just fear the royal house too much to say or do anything about it.”

“You...”

“But hey, your elder brother ended up dying on that same expedition, didn’t he? What a coincidence. Luckily, you were there to take up the heavy responsibility of becoming king.” Marrick finished with a crooked grin still plastered across his face.

“It’s still your fault, you old bastard!”

“He wanted my granddaughter,” Marrick said flatly.

“He loved her!”

“He’d never even talked to her, and she was already to be married... which your father took issue with.” Marrick rolled his eyes. “You know, I didn’t really like that boy if I’m to be completely honest, but she did, and that’s all that mattered. Then, your father tried to kidnap her while she was still grieving. He

deserves everything he got and more. How shameless can one royal family be? He was already married to your mother—there's no way a descendant of mind would play concubine or second wife."

"Fun story, though," the old elf continued. "Did you know that Auna still doesn't know that it was your father who ambushed us or what actually happened to her betrothed? And she thinks that she's just lucky that I happened to decide to go along that day? How convenient was it that I was there? After being couped up for years, that was the day I decided to spend some time with her. Very very convenient."

"You!"

"I... was more than enough for your father and his little squad back then, and I am more than enough for you today. Nothing you say or do matters anymore. For this is the final day that House Sinclair of Astrus exists as the world knows it. And in a few weeks, I'm sure nothing will exist of the Sinclair name, and that House Ileal will follow soon after."

"Even if I die, I'll be sure to take you out with me," Traven half shouted in his muffled voice.

"Oh, I sure am glad I decided to take it easy for the last couple of decades. I doubt I would have lived long enough to enjoy this, otherwise," Marrick said with a toothy grin. His eyes still shone strongly. He was ready for a fight. "Well, boy? Are you going to show this old man what you got or are you going to sit there like a statue until you wither away?"

"Hmph!" Traven snorted. "I've been waiting for this for a long time, too."

With that said, the former king spread his arms wide, causing a blizzard full of snow and ice to form around him. The blizzard was so dense and rotated so fast that it was almost impossible to make out the man made of ice that floated in the center. Finally, the next instant, Traven pushed his hands forward and all the razor sharp ice particles exploded out toward Marrick.

Marrick's smile grew larger, and he waved his hand in front of himself. A single layer of sand formed in front of him just as the pieces of ice hit. Every piece of ice left a large indentation in the sand wall, but not a single piece managed to make it through.

"You're just like your father," Marrick said. "Always so forceful when a little bit of finesse is all it takes." The ice on the opposite side of his sand wall was let to slip in further, then another layer of sand formed on the outside. Soon, every piece of the blast had been ground into fine particles and fell helplessly to the ground.

After that, large black ice spikes began rapidly firing toward Marrick. The elder elf, just as casual as always, directed his sand to catch and trap every spike before finely breaking them up. The former king's ice just didn't seem to be working against the old elf.

"You're probably realizing it by now, right?" Marrick paused the grinding to talk. "I know more about your family than you do, and that includes all your skills. I think once your entire line is wiped out, it will be a good time to let Auna know what happened. What do you think?"

"I think you talk too much, old bastard. And because of that, I think you're about to die." In front of Marrick's eyes, the ice figure crumbled to pieces, and the next moment, Traven appeared directly next

to Marrick and grabbed the old elf by the forearms. “You know about my family? Then you know what happens when we get close enough to touch you.”

“That was a neat little trick,” Marrick said, still nonchalant—like he wasn’t being held by a person who could freeze entire bodies in the matter of seconds. “It looks like your skill is actually well above your father’s. You can actually transform fully and even use some kind of... what was that? A cloning ability? Substitution?”

“The dead don’t need to know,” Traven smiled an awkward smile with his frozen face as he looked down where he was gripping Marrick. But soon, a frown fell over his face and he mechanically creased his brow in confusion.

“You’ve got it wrong, lad. In this case, the dead is the one with the information I asked for. How dumb can a former king be? Did your father tell you nothing of our battle? He may not have had as good control over this ability you’re using, but did you seriously think he didn’t try the same thing you are?”

“But...” Traven tried to pull his hands back, but to his horror, they were quickly locked down by Marrick’s sand.

“All you did was save these old bones of mine the pains of moving. I thank you for that,” Marrick said with the smile that had yet to disappear from his wrinkled face. “It seems like I won’t be getting an answer, after all. Such a shame. It seemed like such a neat ability.” The old elf spoke into the air to no one in particular.

Soon, a whirlwind of sand appeared below Traven, who was still struggling to get free. It started at the man’s feet and slowly worked its way up. The former king cried out in agonizing pain as he fought with everything he had to stop it. His snow and ice clashed with the sand, but every time, it was overpowered and the sand continued to creep up.

“It looks like whatever that ability was, you can’t do it again in such a short time frame. It’s a pity. You could have used it to buy a little more time in this world, but such is fate.” With the smile still on his face, Marrick let the sand continue grinding through the statue in front of him without letting go. Even when Traven broke his own arms off, Marrick just used the flexibility of his sand to trap him once again.

Soon enough, the screaming stopped when Traven realized that it was his final moments. The sand had made its way to the bottom of his chest, and his heart was next.

“You get it now?” Marrick asked. “You didn’t stand a snowball’s chance in hell against me. But to be fair, I doubt many would.” The old elf glanced over the battlefield and his eyes landed on quite a gruesome scene.

At the back of the army, or what was left of it, was an excessive amount of scattered limbs and mages on the ground. Actually, now that he looked closer, it seemed that every one of the detached limbs was a leg. Not a single arm lay detached in the bunch. The old man didn’t quite understand, but he couldn’t help but find that man’s companion to be interesting with her peculiarities.

“Hmm...” Marrick said and raised his now free hand—now that the entire arm of Traven had been ground to icy powder—and scratched at his chin. “It isn’t a bad strategy, especially for a beast. Remove the arms, and they can’t attack, but remove the legs, and they lose all mobility. And if she isn’t worried

about any of their attacks, then the only real choice is to go after the legs. She may be quite the intelligent beast.”

His eyes then fell to the other side of the battle with the army—where the man he would call one of the few who could fight against him was. The man was a walking meatshield. He had the same qualities as his companion, though in different ways.

While the young bunny dodged every attack that got close to hitting, the man allowed many to land. Though, those attacks that landed didn't seem to have much of an effect on the man. If ever an attack broke skin, the wound was healed almost instantly, and with the armor the man was wearing, not many attacks had that chance. Looking the man over, Marrick noticed a part of the extremely durable leg armor was actually badly damaged.

“I wonder what kind of attack was able to do that,” he said to himself. “Interesting... very interesting.” Derek Hunt also seemed to have chosen a similar strategy to his companion. Every once in a while, he would swing his glaive in a horizontal arc and a crescent blade would form, cutting many off at the knees before they even realized it. Sometimes, the arc would hit a powerful soldier and stop, then it was like it hit again and again until it made it through. Though he didn't seem as choosy as his companion, as he had cut a few arms off as well.

It looked like the two were going for as few casualties as possible, but also seemed that he had killed a few soldiers in the fight. There were a handful of dead bodies laying between him and the fighting between the others from the three kingdoms.

“Oh? Over already?” Marrick asked to nobody as his sand ran out of material to grind and he received a notification. He might not have gotten anything from the notification, but just hearing it and knowing what caused it was a great feeling—one he hadn't experienced in a long, long time.

After dismissing the notification, Marrick looked down at his arms where a very thin layer of sand—almost invisible to the naked eye—was constantly revolving around. “He should have known better than to try to freeze sand containing no moisture. Poor delusional man... An idiot to his last breath. Like father, like son, like grandson...”

The old elf then gave the battlefield one more cursory glance. “Let's see... should I lend someone a hand?” Soon, his eyes fell on the Dawn Siren. “Well... she sure as shit doesn't need it.”