# Chapter One: The Watcher

In the 345th year of the Imperial Calendar, the earth split open, revealing a rift that would never close.

What emerged from that chasm was not molten lava, but a labyrinth—an inexplicable structure with no entrance, no end, and no reason. From its depths surged a tide of nightmares—creatures born of black mist, crawling forth to consume the land, poison rivers, and rot the hearts of men.

The Empire descended into chaos. Wave after wave of soldiers, knights, and clerics were thrown into the abyss like moths to flame. None returned.

Then came the day the final horn was blown, and the last legion stood ready.

A single general faced the labyrinth.

He was no more than thirty—a low-ranking officer who had never married, his sword still missing half its engraving. Brilliant in both command and blade, he had spent his career overlooked for his blunt honesty and defiance of superiors. But now, with the Empire's finest in ruins and the chain of command broken, fate pressed its weight onto his shoulders.

He did not see it as glory. He knew this would not be a campaign from which one returned.

His plan was stark and simple: while the legion clashed head-on to buy time, he would slip into the depths of the maze alone, seeking its source—if it had a "heart," then someone had to reach inside it, no matter what would tear them apart.

The battle began.

As blood and fire painted the first stair red, soldiers clashed with the abominations at the labyrinth’s threshold. Shrouded in the chaos, the general entered alone.

Inside, the labyrinth was endless. Silent. Unsolvable. Its walls shifted slowly, its corridors grew like vines, space itself bent and breathed. He pressed on, guided only by his boots, by instinct, by sheer will—or perhaps by fate. And somehow, he arrived.

At the heart.

A "control room"—vast, empty, cold. It felt like the forgotten nerve center of a god.

There were no levers. No runes. No keys.

Only a node of raw magic floating in the air—and a terrifying truth:

The monsters were not summoned by some dark will.

They were a natural byproduct of magic.

Just as sunlight brings both warmth and shadow, so too does ambient magic give rise to malformed creatures. One cannot stop the sun from rising. One cannot stop monsters from forming.

The labyrinth had done nothing. It merely formed around a magic node too saturated with power. That alone turned it into the epicenter of horror.

He stood motionless before the pulsating core, its magical veins glowing softly.

There was no miracle. No salvation.

Only a choice.

**"If I cannot destroy it… I will stop it."**

He removed his insignia and spoke his last message to his lieutenant: “Don’t come looking.”

Then, he stepped into the heart.

His flesh ignited under the torrent of arcane energy. His mind disassembled across the spell-etched lattice. His consciousness dissolved, stretched, and reshaped—until it became a vessel.

He did not become the master of the labyrinth.

He became the labyrinth itself.

He chose this, so no one would ever again claim ownership over this cursed place.

From that day forward, the magic no longer spilled into the world. He absorbed it. Contained it. Digested it. No new horrors emerged from the rift.

The labyrinth grew silent.

And he—he entered a place beyond time, beyond speech, beyond light.

A prison.

A curse.

**It had a name: Eternal Solitude.**

# Chapter Two: The Man Forgotten by Memory

Time passed, slowly but surely. In the dim corridors of the labyrinth, only the monsters remained—and the general, now assimilated into the maze itself.

**Year One**: The seal held firm.  
**Year Five**: Monster activity began to wane. Silence returned to the labyrinth’s outer edges.  
**Year Ten**: The world slowly forgot its fear. The cursed land was shaded grey on the maps, labeled only as a "Forbidden Zone"—a tale for fireside warnings, not history books.  
**Year Forty**: Some still remembered.

Veterans of the final battle, men who had once served under the general, would sometimes return. They pitched tents near the entrance, bringing flasks of strong liquor and sacks of old rations. They sat around the fire, drinking, laughing, speaking toward the seal as if he were just across from them.

Some would whisper, *“He can hear us… can’t he?”*

Others would shout, grinning, *“You're still in there! We haven’t forgotten you!”*

They spoke of the new emperor’s coronation, of the children they’d welcomed into the world, of their own aging bodies and fading strength. They spoke of the vows they made long ago, still etched in their hearts.

The general never responded.  
But the soft glow within the seal never faded.  
He was still there.

**Year Fifty**: An old woman stood before the faint light.

She was frail and hunched, leaning on her children for support. She stood silently for a long time, then raised her right hand and gave a crisp, trembling salute—sharp and formal.

She had once been his lieutenant.

She said nothing. She knew the general would not answer.  
But she left him a final message:

**“This may truly be my last visit, sir.  
But I promise… I won’t let the world forget you.”**

Then she turned and left, never to return.

**Year One Hundred**: No one came anymore.

The kingdom had changed dynasties. City-states had risen and fallen. Maps had been redrawn. The labyrinth was no longer myth—it had become myth’s ashes, a half-lost legend marked only by a crumbling ruin and a misread name.

But the general remained.

He did not die. Bound to the wellspring of magic, his body did not age. Not a fingernail cracked. But his mind—the fragile, intricate mind of a human—was not made of magic.

And it had begun to collapse.

His memories eroded like carvings on an ancient stone, worn by the endless wind and rain of time. First to vanish was his name. Then faces of family, voices of comrades, his lieutenant’s farewell… All disintegrated into ash, shed silently in the lightless void.

Only the **mission** remained.

But he no longer remembered who he was.

One day, he *awoke*. Or something like awakening. A flicker of awareness sparked within him. He realized he had forgotten too much—and tried to leave something behind.

He tried to write.

He pressed his fingers into the ground, tracing what he thought were words—but the shapes were fragmented, like shattered puzzle pieces. No meaning formed. Not even the *concept* of language returned to him.

Language is a tool between people.  
But he had not spoken, nor heard another soul, for so long.  
And so, the tool had rusted into uselessness.

He began scratching at the walls—using his nails, stones, bones. At first he tried writing his name. Then he drew lines. Eventually, images.

More chilling than the forgetting was the fact that he no longer remembered *how to feel fear* about forgetting.

He did not know whether his drawings could convey anything.  
But he remembered one thing:

**“No one must enter here.”**

He no longer questioned it. He had forgotten the reason.  
Only the command remained.

In the centuries that followed, he began observing the behavior of the monsters. He no longer fought them—he studied. He poured magic into the fading concept of "combat," recreating tactics, weapons, and gear the creatures could use.

They mimicked **his** tactics.

He had become… a **tactical system** within the labyrinth.

Speechless. Memoryless.  
But methodical. Precise.

All intruders were now deemed threats.  
So he carved the order into the stone:

**“No one must enter here.”**

Once again, the labyrinth became a deathtrap.

But this time, it was not due to magic running wild.  
It was guarded by one who had forgotten his name—  
Yet remembered his duty.

And in the deepest chamber of the seal,  
a single light still flickered.

**Chapter Three: The Stirring**

Two hundred years had passed.

The kingdom that once ruled the land had long since perished. From its ashes rose a new empire, forged atop ruins, with new castles, new laws, and even a new name for the forbidden land once feared by all: **The Great Rift**.

No one spoke of the ancient war anymore.  
No one remembered the general who sacrificed himself to a labyrinth—just to keep the world from falling apart.

Until one rainy night, a young mage—alone and restless—performed a forbidden ritual: **Interplanar Communion**.

A spell outlawed for good reason. Its intent: to contact a powerful being from beyond this world. If successful, the caster might gain unimaginable knowledge. But the danger? You could never choose who would answer.

And on that night, the abyss answered.

In a single heartbeat, the mage’s mind shattered like ice under a hammer. His consciousness was pierced by something vast and incomprehensible—neither beast nor spell, but **a presence** beyond all reckoning.

He was not tempted.  
He was not possessed.  
**He was replaced.**

What now walked the world in his skin was not the mage, but a **demon**.

It spoke with his voice, smiled his smile, walked the streets, studied magic—indeed, with alarming speed, it advanced far beyond any of its peers. Soon it held a position of court advisor, dazzling the empire with spellcraft unseen in centuries.

But deep within the soul, the real mage had drowned.

The demon had only meant to play a little joke. A fool foolish enough to reach into the abyss? Irresistible. It planned to toy with him, then return.

But this world surprised it.

Here, it found a **node of wild, unclaimed magic**—a source so rich that every creature of the abyss would kill to possess it. A **magic node** of staggering potential.

It scoured the remnants of the old kingdom’s records, piecing together half-lost lore:  
A young general.  
A sealed labyrinth.  
A world-shielding lockdown of mana.

It understood.

If it could seize that node quietly, without alerting the other demons… it would become something far greater.

So it began its work.

First, it **rewrote history**.

Silently, it altered the archives of the royal library. The war was rebranded: no longer a cataclysm, but a “Strategic Asset Transfer Initiative.” The sealed labyrinth? No longer a prison of monsters, but a **vault**—a sacred chamber where the old kingdom had hidden its wealth and weapons, awaiting the rightful heir.

Then, it forged a final document:  
**A royal edict lost to time**, declaring that the labyrinth held the treasures of the past, to be claimed by future rulers.

And it placed this forged decree before the current emperor.

This emperor was no fool, but a man shackled by a meddling council. He dreamed of liberation, of expansion, of forging a new golden age with his own two hands.

This “lost fortune” was everything he needed.

But to ensure it became his personal wealth—not the empire’s—he mobilized not the army, but a secret expedition: trusted confidants and a select few royal knights. Together, they set out—unseen—toward the long-forgotten **Great Rift**.

They thought they were uncovering the secrets of a lost dynasty.

They did not know they were walking toward a guardian—  
A sentinel who had long since forgotten his name,  
Who could no longer speak,  
Who no longer understood words.  
Only the mission remained.

From deep within the seal, he felt them coming.

Unfamiliar.  
Unrecognized.  
No identity.  
No access.

One designation: **Intruders**.

And so, he released the first wave.

This was not chaos—it was war. Organized, deliberate, strategic. He activated the labyrinth’s outer defenses, reawakened long-dormant legions. Though memoryless, his instincts still echoed with command—and the monsters obeyed.

Once more, the labyrinth awakened.

The beasts surged like a tide. Steel-clawed hooves shattered stone. Piercing howls filled the dark. It was not a random swarm—it was an army. Structured. Disciplined. Deadly.

The emperor’s forces were elite—Imperial Knights, trained and hardened.

But they were not facing another nation.

They were facing a remnant of a past age:  
**A general who ended an era**,  
And the undead legion he now led—  
A legion that did not sleep, did not fear, and could not be exhausted.

**The blood war began.**

The Great Rift echoed once more with death and silence.  
And the world remembered the **labyrinth**.

But no one knew the war had begun with nothing more than…  
**a demon’s whisper**.

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# Chapter Four: The Fracture

The king's secret campaign ended in failure.

He had brought only a handful of personal guards and a small detachment of knights—not out of arrogance, but out of fear. He dared not let the council discover his plans.

But the labyrinth offered no mercy.

At first, the journey through the Great Rift was uneventful. The skies were clear, the earth still. His men believed this would be a smooth operation. Yet the moment they crossed into the maze, everything turned.

Under the assault of the monster legions, the king’s force stood no chance.  
They were not defeated—**they were spared**.

More precisely: **they were allowed to leave.**

In the deepest chamber, the general—now little more than a presence embedded in the core—watched the battle unfold.

He could no longer comprehend words like *“succession”* or *“inheritance”*. He could not decipher motives or judge intent.

But something within his blood—some frozen instinct from a former life—whispered:

**He didn’t want to kill.**

So he let them flee.

And in doing so, he planted a seed of catastrophe.

The king returned to the capital—battered, pale, and shaken.

But he did not retreat from his ambitions. Quite the opposite. Now, more than ever, he was convinced:

**There was something in that labyrinth.**

Those monsters fought with coordination. They attacked in waves, then stopped when he was at death’s door. They did not behave like wild beasts—they **guarded** something.

“**They’re following orders.**”  
“**It’s exactly like the decree described.**”

That decree—**forged by the demon-possessed mage**—was now confirmed by experience. Lies and truth had aligned perfectly.

A carefully woven myth had become “evidence” by the hand of a forgotten general’s mercy.

The king hesitated no longer.

He turned to the council and applied pressure.

“The monsters in the labyrinth are regaining strength.”  
“If we don’t strike first, we risk devastation.”  
“This is a matter of national security.”

He spoke nothing of treasure.  
Only defense.  
A preemptive strike, veiled in patriotic duty.

The council didn’t care for the truth. They never had.

They cared about control—about using military campaigns to win over nobles, suppress dissent, and expand the state’s coffers.

So, they agreed.

They dispatched the **Kingdom’s First Order of Knights**:  
**The Pale Night Brigade**.

An elite mixed-arms force, trained to operate independently, loyal not to the king or any noble house—but to the **Council’s First Command**.

Which meant: **no more restraint.**

And most tragically, they were true believers—sworn to the sacred code of knighthood. They would fight to the last breath.

And so, the general—forgotten, speechless, yet still deadly—**did not hold back**.

Once again, the labyrinth ignited with war.  
Steel clashed. Blood flowed. The Great Rift burned with iron and fire.

Far from the front lines, deep in the archives of the Council Hall,  
a quiet, mild-eyed court mage pulled a faded expense scroll from the royal library…

…and let it crumble into ash.

**The will of the abyss had already made its home at the heart of the kingdom.**

# Chapter Five: The Black Night

The Knight Order was nearly annihilated.

Clad in the Empire’s finest rune-inscribed armor, veterans of countless wars, they had once struck fear across borders. Their codename: **Pale Night**.

On the day they marched, storm clouds churned above the Great Rift.  
But the knights felt no dread.  
They believed in no gods, feared no demons.  
They placed their faith in **discipline**, **steel**, and the sword that cuts through all.

They entered the labyrinth in formation, deploying by quadrants, baiting enemy positions based on calculated threat probabilities. It was a textbook invasion—impeccable.

But this time, they faced someone… different.

A mind forged in apocalypse—  
A man who once led an army into the depths of the abyss—  
A **tactical genius**, even stripped of memory, language, and humanity.

He was still fighting.

He no longer needed to think. His body, magic, and awareness had long fused into the labyrinth. Every heartbeat of every monster, every corner of every hallway—extensions of his mind.

He **was** the battlefield.

And the instincts that once commanded legions reawakened the moment war began.

The knights did not lose to beasts.  
They lost to the **general’s instincts**.

Ambush. Encirclement. Flanking. Collapse.

The monsters advanced not as a horde, but as a trained army—coordinated, strategic, and relentless. Driven by an invisible will, they moved with terrifying precision.

Once the knights lost tactical superiority, their strength no longer mattered.

No matter how skilled they were, they could not outlast a force that **never stopped regenerating**.

In the end, out of two thousand elite knights, only a handful of logistics staff escaped.

Their testimonies were fragmented, delirious—but they all echoed the same haunting truth:

**“They… they weren’t wild. Someone… was commanding them.”**

The Imperial Council could no longer stay silent.

They had once dismissed it as a mana surge or a leaky ancient seal.

But not now.

The Knight Order was no mere force. They were **Pale Night**—a symbol of supremacy across the continent.

And they had been shattered.

Panic set in.

What if these monsters breached the Rift and spread to the cities?  
What if the enemy could not only defend—but strike?  
What if… there was a **mind** inside the labyrinth?

Doubt gave way to fear. Fear gave way to pressure.  
This was no longer a beast-culling operation.  
They were starting to ask:

**“Are we… fighting another civilization?”**

And then—someone said it.  
A name left unspoken for decades, yet known by all:

**“Summon the Sword Saint.”**

**Sword Saint.**

Not a title, but a recognition.

There were only a few across the continent worthy of the name.  
And the Council chose the strongest.

A former borderland wanderer.  
Now known as **Azure Mark**.

She had once split a desert dragon with a single strike, held off an army alone, and vanished thereafter. She followed no laws, answered to no nation.

But she owed the Council a favor.

And now—they called it in.

On a storm-wracked night, a messenger rode through the mountains, delivering a sealed letter.

She gave no reply.

But by dawn, she stood at the edge of the Great Rift.

She wore no armor—it would only slow her sword.  
Only a single blade hung at her back, the edge invisible.

She said nothing.  
Only turned to the official who greeted her, and asked in a low voice:

**“How strong is the enemy?”**

The councilor answered truthfully:

**“The Pale Night Order was annihilated.”**

She nodded, tied her hair into a ponytail—

And stepped into the maze.

# Chapter Six: The Return

**She had come.**

**Azure Mark**—the strongest Sword Saint on the continent.

She brought no heralds.  
She spoke no vows.  
Yet countless warriors followed her without question.

She stood at the edge of the Great Rift, black hair flowing beneath storm winds.  
The dark mist of the labyrinth parted before her, as if **cut** by her presence.

She stepped inside.

No one knew if she felt fear. Or tension.  
She was still as death.

But the moment her foot crossed the threshold, the labyrinth began to tremble.

**The Gatekeeper awoke.**

It was not awareness. Not resistance.  
It was… *resonance*—a long-buried instinct, born from the battlefield, stirring again after centuries of silence.

His memories were still in chaos. His words still lost.  
But he **knew**: this one was different.

**She was a warrior.**

And so was he.

The Sword Saint drew her blade.

**The first strike** tore through a towering wall of monsters—wind howled through the corridor like thunder cracking through bone.

**The second strike** severed hidden ambush squads, reducing them to vapor, their bodies unraveling into pure magic.

**The third strike** carved a circular shockwave, erasing two advancing flanks in a single arc.  
Silence followed—like the calm within a storm’s eye.

She did not rage.  
She did not scream.  
She was **cleaning**—as naturally as one breathes.

The army behind her was the same.  
Calm. Methodical. Unshaken.

They were not proud like the Pale Night Knights.  
They were not imperial.  
They followed her for who she was. For what she stood for.

They did not come to conquer.  
They came to **fight**, of their own will.

And in the depths of the maze, something responded.

The general’s instinct began to resonate.

He **saw** her sword. Not with eyes, but through flows of mana, through frequencies in stone, through echoes in the hallways.

*“Strong.”*  
*“Disciplined.”*  
*“Why does this feel… familiar? I’ve fought like this before. I think… yes. Like this—”*

And as he remembered how he once moved—

**Magic answered.**

He descended again.

Not as a voice in the mist.  
Not as a distant will.

But as a **form**, rising from the heart of the labyrinth—  
A vessel forged from pure mana, shaped by memory, by instinct, by command.

He stepped onto the battlefield.

Mist coiled behind him like a cloak.  
He had no face, no eyes—only a sword, shaped as if torn from the recesses of his forgotten past.

He was not a king.  
Not a demon.  
Not a monster.

He was a **peak of an era**—returned.

The Sword Saint felt the change instantly.

This was no ordinary opponent.  
He had no body, yet radiated **weight**.  
He had no voice, yet every gesture echoed the cadence of ancient wars.

She tried to lock onto him—  
But there was **nothing**. No mana signature, no physical point.

He was untouchable.  
Not defended—**nonexistent** in the space of her strike.

She lashed out.

A perfect cut.  
Contact—*but nothing happened*.  
The air screamed, but the figure did not waver.

He did not dodge.

He had **never** been in the path.

She changed stance—leapt, dove, spun.  
A triple slash like falling stars—

Still nothing.

And for the first time in her life—

She felt **helpless**.

Not weak.  
But like someone standing before a **waterfall**,  
Unable to engage, not because of skill,  
But because the very world refused to allow the clash.

This was not a duel.  
This was a confrontation between realities.

The general felt no hatred.

He simply raised his hand.

A pulse of twisted mana split the battlefield—isolating the Sword Saint from her troops.

Now they were alone.

He did not remember names.  
He could not speak.

But somehow, he **remembered**…

This was called **battle**.

He struck—sword flashes like gales.  
He stepped—gravity warped beneath him.

He **was** the labyrinth.  
Where he pointed, the maze shattered.

She had once cleaved dragons and armies.

But he—  
He had once **ended** an age.

# Chapter Seven: Called Human

She was defeated.

She—the Sword Saint, the continent’s mightiest blade, the last trump card of both Kingdom and Council—had fallen before a figure of shadow, untouchable and unknowable.

That strike had not cleaved flesh.  
Nor broken will.  
It shattered her entire *system* of combat—her reflexes, strength, speed, judgment—*all* crushed beneath a single blow.

When the blade descended, the one hailed as invincible could not even **conceive** of how to block it.

The air turned to water.  
Her bones turned to dust.  
Her body flew dozens of paces backward, crashing into the stone pillars at the maze’s edge.

Then—blackness.

The warriors who had followed her were not trained soldiers.  
They had come for her. For the legend.

And now, seeing that very legend cast down, utterly powerless,  
they faltered.

“Retreat!”  
“Get her out!”

Someone screamed, voice raw and torn.

The line broke. A handful of warriors threw themselves into the chaos, lifting her battered form, forcing their way out through blood and flame.

They expected to die.

The enemy was too many.  
The path too long.  
She was too wounded.

They braced for a last stand.

But the impossible happened.

The shadowed figure **did not pursue**.

The monsters—dozens of them—halted mid-charge.  
And then… remained still.

Like pieces on a chessboard whose master had stepped away,  
they simply watched the fleeing warriors disappear into the distance.

Not a snarl.  
Not a step.  
Not a sound.

They had been **spared**.

Some of the wounded turned their heads, too stunned to believe.

And there—still standing in the heart of the labyrinth—was the figure.  
Faceless.  
Undefined.

The magical cloak whispered in the wind, rising like fog around a body of quiet power.

He made no gesture. Spoke no word.

But every soul present felt the same thing:

*“He didn’t want to destroy us.”*  
*“He just… didn’t want us to enter.”*

And that realization spread.

It reached not only the retreating army,  
but the Council, watching in silent dread.

Even the one who had set all this in motion—  
**the demon wearing the mage’s skin**—  
felt a shift in the air.

He had believed this was a **system**.  
A rational defense construct.  
A magic-born commander spawned from mana overflow.  
He thought he could escalate the war, provoke chaos, seize control of the node—  
without ever needing to act himself.

But he had been wrong.

This was no monster.

This… **Gatekeeper**…

**He was human.**

*He still was.*

# Chapter Eight: That Which Came From Two Hundred Years Ago…

She awoke.

Ten days had passed since **that** strike.

For a time, she believed she had died. In that single instant, her consciousness had been severed—like a bowstring pulled to its limit, suddenly snapping. Her strength lost its purpose. Her thoughts fell into void.

And yet, she lived.

The medics told her that a few warriors had carried her out of the labyrinth at the cost of their own blood.  
The monsters had not pursued.

She didn’t dwell on it.  
She assumed the enemy simply had some kind of “territorial boundary.”

But defeat—without landing a single blow—gnawed at her.

Restless, she took up her sword again, seeking calm the only way she knew how.

In the courtyard, under slanting morning light, she stepped forward.  
A sudden dash.  
A clean arc of steel.

**Arc Moon Flash.**  
The most basic technique of her family’s sword school—passed down through generations. It was nothing special. Every novice learned it.

But as her blade cut the air, a memory struck her.

That **figure** had used this technique, too.

Her hand froze mid-swing.

Fragments of the battle rewound in her mind.  
The stance.  
The angle.  
The half-turn of the hips.  
The inward draw of the elbow—

It was **identical** in structure.

One move could be coincidence.  
But all his fundamentals mirrored hers.

Her heartbeat quickened.

She rushed back to her room, pulled open her old travel bag, and retrieved a notebook—worn and yellowed.

**The Family Codex.**

A handwritten journal passed down from her mother’s mother.  
It contained sword forms long since retired… and one faded page from the family tree.

It bore a name:

**Alesia Elwyn.**

Her ancestor.  
Once a lieutenant in the army of the old kingdom.  
Once a comrade of the man who ended an era.

She had never given it much thought—only assumed it to be some romantic family legend.

But now, it hit her like thunder:

*“I… have met him before.”*

Not in time.  
But in **technique**.

That sword form had passed from general to lieutenant…  
From lieutenant to bloodline…  
Refined over generations…  
And became the modern art of **Azure Swordsmanship**.

And he—he was clearly not of her family.  
So he must have been…

Her fingers trembled as she flipped through the pages.

And for the first time, she felt as if the ink itself were whispering to her.

**“This may truly be my last visit, sir.  
But I promise… I won’t let the world forget you.”**

# Chapter Nine: The Abyss

The demon had run out of patience.

He did not belong to this world.  
It was a reckless experiment—a foolish mage tampering with forbidden rites—that allowed him to slip through the crack in the Gate of the Abyss.

At first, he was merely an idle observer, passing the time.

Until he **saw** the labyrinth.

An entire **mana node**—concentrated, pure, unclaimed.

This was no mythical “gift of civilization.”  
It was a **forgotten miracle**.

By the standards of the Abyss, such a resource was priceless.  
Every demon would fight to claim it.  
So he made a decision: he would steal it quietly—**before the others noticed**.

His plan was simple: harvest it in secret, rise to power, and ascend as a **Lord of the Abyss**.

But time passed.  
And he began to realize a terrifying truth:

**“The Abyss has no secrets.”**

He had been gone too long.

The other demons were not fools.  
Someone disappearing into another realm for this long… clearly, he had found **something**.

If even one of them got curious enough to take a peek—

*“I have to move faster.”*

So he did.

He **killed the king**—  
The man had served his purpose in the contingency plan. He was no longer necessary.

Then he **seized control of the Council**.

Abyssal magic needs no hypnosis.  
It simply awakens what already hides inside the heart:

**Ambition. Fear. Worship. Control.**

He twisted every desire into a gear—  
And with them, built a machine of war so perfect that even its creators believed they were acting of their own will.

None knew they were being controlled.  
They merely felt: *“We must act. Now.”*

And so, the Council passed a law—urgent, logical, unopposed:

“Due to increased monster activity in the labyrinth and potential threats to the Imperial Capital, we hereby authorize immediate formation of the **Maze Suppression Army**.”

They recruited from towns.  
Drafted from military academies.  
Drained every border resource.

They mobilized **everything**—even if it meant bankrupting the future of the kingdom.

The will of the Abyss no longer hid.

It would **tear the seal open**, and **devour** the Gatekeeper within.

Not out of hatred.  
But because—by consuming his **will**, it could more easily seize control of the labyrinth’s entire mana structure.

Above the Great Rift, the sky began to **change color**.

Not black.  
Not red.  
But a shifting chaos of hues—  
A rupture of laws,  
Two worlds overlapping,  
Tearing, stitching, and tearing again.

Inside the labyrinth, the **general's perception trembled**.

It wasn’t a disturbance from the battlefield.

It came from the **world itself**—from the foundations of reality unraveling.

He could not speak.

But somewhere deep inside,  
**he remembered**—

*“There’s something I must do… again.”*

# Chapter Ten: Obsession

Before the gate of the labyrinth, **rivers of blood** ran.

Wave after wave of soldiers surged forward.  
This was the greatest force the Empire had ever mustered:

Six legions combined.  
Floating magitech cannons.  
Runic phalanxes.  
Harmonized divine channels.  
Even ancient war relics long buried were unearthed and reactivated.

**This was everything the Empire had.**

And yet—like sparks tossed into the ocean—each force was snuffed out, one after another, in the maw of the Great Rift.

The general made no plans.  
He didn’t think.  
He simply **defended**.

He did not care who the enemy was.  
He made no judgment of motives.  
He did not count the dead.  
He held no hatred.  
He offered no scorn.

He merely responded to the rhythm of intrusion—  
Deploying, repositioning, reinforcing—again and again.

He was not “killing.”  
He was **enforcing a rule**:

*“Entry defines the enemy. The enemy must be stopped.”*

He no longer felt.

But he had once been a general.  
And his instinct was to **win every war**.

Thus, the labyrinth became a **meat grinder** for the imperial army.

The soldiers fell in droves.  
Though they outnumbered their foes, they **could not break the defense**.

Because they weren’t facing monsters.  
They were facing a **military genius**, and an army that feared **nothing**.

And this…  
Was only the beginning.

High above the battlefield, behind the observation deck—

A **figure** finally abandoned his disguise.

The demon dropped his mask.

Once, he had been the court mage—calm, pale-skinned, soft-spoken, endlessly trustworthy.

Now—his **true form emerged**.

Flames exploded from within him, melting flesh and bone into molten iron.  
His skull elongated, horns twisted toward the heavens, wings split from his back like fissures in volcanic rock.

He loomed like a mountain, eyes burning like furnace coals,  
Each footstep **melted** the earth beneath him.

He had no name.  
He needed none.

He was from the **Abyss**—not to wage war,  
But to **claim this world’s forgotten gift**.

Now, at last—he waited no longer.  
He hid no longer.  
He **endured no longer**.

He roared—  
A sound beyond the threshold of human hearing.  
The Great Rift **shook**.

Stone cracked.  
Mountains in the distance **rained birds like black hail**.

And then,  
**He charged into the labyrinth.**

**And he was seen.**

Not by eyes—  
But by the very lattice of mana within the maze, which convulsed the moment he entered.

This enemy did **not belong** to this world.

*“He has no inertia. No rules. No anchors.”*  
*“He is a rupture in order.”*  
*“And I… am order.”*

The general stopped moving.

No more shifting units.  
No more commanding.

He simply stood—  
Silent—  
Feeling that monstrous mana like wildfire racing toward the heart of the maze.

Then—  
He **descended** once more.

This time—  
No mist.  
No illusion.  
No echo.

This time, he **forged a body**—  
One closest to his former, **human self**.

He held his old sword.

He wore a cloak of shadow.  
His stature was imposing.  
His face hidden behind armor.  
Only his eyes remained—two glowing lights, burning white with resolve.

He could not remember the enemy’s name.  
Could not recall the war’s meaning.

But he remembered—

*“No one must enter here.”*

And so,  
In the deepest chamber of the labyrinth—

**The final war was about to begin.**

**Chapter Eleven: The Daily Adventurer of**

He came.

The true form of the Abyssal demon tore into the labyrinth like a volcanic eruption.  
He scorched the air, seared the ground, and shattered reality itself.  
He was no creature.  
He was destruction incarnate—an intent made flesh.  
He had not come to fight.  
He had come to **devour**.

The walls of the maze cracked and collapsed.  
Mana flows distorted, twisted into chaos.  
The very structure of space reacted like a system injected with a foreign, incompatible language.

This was the enemy.

**The real enemy.**

A being so overwhelming, so alien, that even the laws of the world buckled in his presence.

And then—**he** stepped forward.

Just as he had, two centuries ago.

No longer a projection. No longer a commander from the shadows.  
He synchronized fully with the labyrinth’s heart, forging a body of **light and steel**.

It was not the power of gods.

It was the will of a general who had **never fallen**—and the **obsession** that refused to die with him.

He stood alone.

Behind him, countless monsters arrayed themselves—not snarling or charging, but standing in formation. Their steps aligned. Their eyes forward. They waited.

He raised his hand—the legion advanced.  
He drew his sword—the maze echoed in response.

From his body surged a soft, blinding light—  
The glow of mana made so pure it shimmered like **dawn stars piercing the void**.

**The battle began.**

The demon’s flames rained down like meteors, burning through stone, melting the air itself.  
Anything caught near him was unmade.

But the general did not fall back.

He led ambushes. Coordinated flanks. Traps. Feints. Counter-encirclements.  
He **was the battlefield**—every wall, every path, every stair was an extension of his mind.

The monster legions never broke formation.  
They acted like muscle and nerve—sacrificing, reforming, surging forward again like living cells protecting a heart.

And always—he stood at the front.

His blade flashed—severing tendrils of the Abyss.  
His stride did not falter—even before a demon taller than mountains.

He never screamed.  
Never cast spells.  
His gaze never changed.

He simply… **never fell**.

The demon was furious.

He didn’t understand how this world had produced such a foe.

As a being of vast knowledge, he *recognized* what the general was the moment he saw him—and that made it **worse**.

Because he couldn’t comprehend it.

“You’ve lost your body… your language… your memory… your past… your future…”  
“Why… are you still stopping me?!”

The general did not answer with words.

His answer—was a sword.

One sword stroke—**through fire**.  
One sword—channeling the full power of the maze—**drove the demon into the core** and **pinned him to the very node** he had tried to desecrate.

Light burst.  
Darkness spilled like ink across the stars.

When the dust settled, the demon’s body had turned to ash.

His final thought whispered, just before oblivion:

*“You… don’t even know… what you’re guarding…”*

But the figure did not respond.

He stood at the center of the labyrinth.

Slowly, he lowered his head, and drove his sword into the ground—

Just as he had done two hundred years ago.

He didn’t know who he was.  
Didn’t know why he fought.  
Didn’t know if any of this had meaning.

But he still remembered one thing:

**“No one must enter here.”**

After that battle, the world fell silent once more.

The land that had screamed returned to stillness.  
Humans left the war behind.  
The monsters withdrew into the depths of the maze.

And the general—

He simply **stood there**.

Unmoving.  
Unyielding.

Not a hero.  
Not a ghost.  
But a **boundary**—

A line drawn by human hands.

A line called:  
**Will.**

# Chapter Twelve: The Forty-First Day

Before it vanished, the demon whispered for a long, long time.

He cursed.  
He mocked.  
He raged—trying to tear the unshaken figure before him apart with words.

But he never realized—

That man had long since **lost language**.

Phrases.  
Syntax.  
Meaning.  
They no longer reached him.  
He could no longer understand.  
Nor did he care.

He simply drove his sword into the earth.

And then—

He kept standing guard.

The battlefield fell silent.  
The demon’s remnants scattered with the wind—leaving no warmth, no echo behind.

But **the outside world erupted**.

Courier birds, battered and bloodied, crash-landed into the capital.

A sealed dispatch was rushed into the Council Chamber.  
One line, hastily scrawled—  
But enough to shatter everything:

**“…the court mage was not human… he was a demon…”**  
**“…the Forbidden Zone was never out of control… it was him… he lied to us…”**

The chamber went still for a long time.

More and more testimonies emerged—  
From the surviving logistics corps of Pale Night.  
From rescued soldiers.

Again and again, the same truth:

*“He lied to us.”*  
*“We were the demon’s vanguard.”*

One aging councilor whispered, voice cracking:

*“Then… who did we attack…?”*

The Sword Saint stepped quietly into the chamber.  
Her eyes were calm.  
Her words, simple:

*“I don’t know. But I think… he’s human. At least, that’s what he insists on being.”*

Meanwhile, at the Great Rift—

Silence remained.

That figure still stood at the heart of the labyrinth.  
He had not vanished.  
Had not moved.

He held no feeling toward the world outside.

Just as before.

But in that moment—  
**a deeper ripple stirred**.

Not a quake of the earth.  
But a tremor in **the rules themselves**.

Above the maze, a faint distortion—barely visible—began to widen in the sky.  
A ripple in space, slow and deliberate,  
like an **unseen gaze** piercing through dimensions.

**From the Abyss**—  
They were watching.

When the demon was destroyed, the entire Abyss **felt it**.  
A cross-world entity had been eliminated.

At first, they had ignored this world.  
Now, they began to **notice**.

Not with rage.  
But with **interest**.  
Not for revenge.  
But for **acquisition**.

The Abyss knows no sympathy.  
But it has laws:

**“To the victor—goes the prize.”**

The labyrinth’s core began to shiver.  
The edge of reality groaned, inaudible but undeniable.

It was not the sound of disaster—  
But the **breathing of a god** before it turns over in its sleep.