

D. of Pride 141

Chapter 141: Unforeseen Changes (2)

Cecilia who was in a state of focus suddenly felt a presence not far from her and she slowly opened her eyes. Seven coloured lights of varying depth flashed across her eyes before mysteriously disappearing.

Seeing that it was Irene, happiness flashed across her eyes before she quickly sprang up and ran towards her.

“Sister Irene so you have returned” Cecilia said as she trodded towards the rock where Irene was sitting.

Irene replied with a small nod “Un I have returned”.

After hearing that, Cecilia tilted her head and looked towards the palace before asking innocently “But why can’t I sense the presence of big brother?”

During these few days, Cecilia had taken quite a liking towards Irene and had started calling her big sister.

Cecilia liked Irene very much and her gentle smile reminded her of her mother. Although she had lost quite a lot, she had also gained two important people that were very dear to her.

Hearing her question Irene looked towards the ceiling before commenting “He should be coming soon”.

“Un...” Cecilia said with delight.

Just as Irene said, it didn’t take long for Simon to return back and as soon as he came, Cecilia waved to him and dashed towards his direction. However, she stopped in her tracks as her spring came to a halt midway.

"I have returned Cecilia. Those bad people that have tormented you and your clan, big brother has made it so that they won't bother you anymore. You no longer have to be worried" Simon tried to give his best smile which he was so bad at to console her and lift all her worries.

"Un..b-but..." Cecilia opened and closed her mouth many times, trying to form some words, but failed miserably. Tears glimmered in the corners of her eyes which she desperately tried to hold back.

"Huh... eh?" Simon did not expect such a reaction and was momentarily stunned. He didn't know why she would suddenly start crying just after seeing him.

"W-what's wrong? Was there any problem while I was gone?" Since he did not know what made her almost cry, he could only ask her about it.

"...." She shook her small head while wiping her tears before saying "No, there was no problem. But big brother... y-you are wounded!!".

It finally dawned on him as to why Cecilia's first reaction was to cry as soon as she saw him. She was already feeling guilty for involving him in all of the trouble so if she saw him injured all over while fighting the enemies that was after her, wouldn't she feel even more mortified after that?

'Ahhh why didn't I think of this before? I am an idiot to appear before her with my wound ridden body'. Such thoughts were revolving inside his head as he hurriedly tried to think of an excuse to calm her.

"T-this is nothing, injury of this level will heal in a jiffy. See some of my wounds have already started healing" Simon thought that he could mend the situation but he was making it even worse.

Irene silently sighed before shifting her gaze away unable to see Simon embarrassing himself any further. 'Those are not the words you use to console others'.

Cecilia came up to Simon with tear-stained eyes and examined his wounds. No matter how he tried to pass it off as light injuries that would quickly heal, one look and Cecilia immediately knew that he was saying all that so she doesn't blame herself.

As she touched those wounds that looked quite deep, especially the ones on his chest, tears fell out from her eyes and dripped on his wounds.

DRIP... DRIP...

At that moment something incredible happened. Boundless energy like that of an ocean circulated through Simon's body. Every vein, muscle and bone in his body were quickly being submerged in that energy.

While the boundless energy was circulating around his body, a calming emerald green light shined all across his wounds. What made Simon open his mouth wide open was that the wounds all around his body were swiftly closing at a miraculous speed. The boundless natural energy that was circulating inside him had healing properties that even healed his internal injuries and also those scars that he received from his previous battles.

What was going on? How could his wounds regenerate at such an insane speed? Even with his natural recovery and regeneration skill, the speed was still exaggerated. The only explanation left was... Simon looked at Cecilia with surprise and astonishment in his eyes.

The ridiculous healing speed, not to mention the boundless energy that was rushing through his body was due to Cecilia. Or to be more exact, her tears contained that miraculous healing ability.

Even Cecilia herself was dumbfounded by the insane speed at which the wounds were closing. She lifted her adorable head and looked at Simon with admiration. Thinking that her big brother had used one of his abilities to instantly cure his injuries which put her mind at ease.

"Big Brother you are truly amazing, even the wounds closed in an instant," She said with joy and relief on her face.

"Eh? Wha?... it wasn't m..." He wanted to say that it wasn't him and instead it was her abilities that had healed him, but when he saw her make such a relieved and clueless face, he couldn't help but gulp his words down.

The only one who wasn't shocked was Irene. Although honestly, even she had underestimated the speed at which Cecilia was manifesting her abilities. 'At this rate, it wouldn't even take her a decade before she could utilize her heaven-defying powers'.

She chose this time to step forward and ask "What took you so long?".

Simon widened his eyes at the sudden presence, he didn't know when Irene had arrived behind him. This woman was becoming more and more mysterious.

Scratching his head, Simon replied, "Well I went to check if this team of adventurers had another group stationed somewhere else in the forest and also to see if those two scurried back out of the forest or not". The two he was talking about was naturally the pair of Chuck and Lisa who he had saved a couple of hours ago.

Though he put it as if he was trying to chase the two away, Irene naturally knew from his action that Simon had a certain level of respect for them to help them out in the first place. The humans and demons were arch-enemies, but it did not mean that they were constantly fighting each other.

However, it was clearly unusual for a demon to help a human on his own accord. Irene was more and more convinced that Simon was unlike any other demon.

"Ahem" forcing a cough Simon decided to return back to his palace. While on the way, he glanced at Cecilia and asked, "How are your clansmen?"

With a gratifying nod, Cecilia happily replied "These past few days have taken a great toll on their body. Right now all of them are sleeping like a log".

"That's good. After they wake up we shall have a feast. I know that all of them have not eaten for a long time" Simon said as he thought about the dishes that he had yet to bring out.

On their way back, Cecilia looked at the wide back of Simon which gave her a sense of relief before muttering in a voice that only she could hear "Thank you... big brother".

After the Forest Spring Spirit Children woke up, they came to the dining hall and saw a marvellous sight that stunned them for a good while.

A grand feast. Lines of food and beverages decorated every part of the table. Plates lining up with delicious food of every kind released an appetizing smell. A sight to behold.

The wide porcelain table that he got from the [Gacha] (now [Ga??????]) on his first day, was finally being used to its full capacity. The children after looking at the delicious food placed on the table, couldn't help but gulp a mouthful as they continuously stared at the dishes, mesmerized.

During their time in the Forest Spring spirit village, they had never seen foods of this kind and variety. However, they weren't to be blamed; after all, these food were a cuisine from the earth.

"Hm?" Simon frowned after seeing that children were hesitating to eat. He had spent quite a lot of time picking out the varieties of food that they might like. Just when he was delving on how to convince them, Cecilia brought a few of them along before taking a seat and eating.

Since Cecilia broke the awkward atmosphere, following her example, the other children also decided to start eating. Looking at the delicious food on the table, their hunger could no longer be contained as they frantically dug in.

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As soon as the taste of the food assaulted their taste buds, they couldn't help mumble in joy as their eyes became as big as saucers. Each of these foods had a unique taste that made children of their age crave it even more.

Seeing them rapidly empty one plate after another Simon gave a satisfied smile, though it scared some of the children near him as they hastily shifted their gazes away and made him quite depressed.

In his mind, Simon decided to work on his smile. It's just that whenever he tried to smile, his fangs would come out, giving him an evil or wicked look.

Simon looked at his side and saw Irene holding her chin with her hand as she watched the merry reaction of the children as they tried one dish after another. Even when she was dazed, she looked absolutely stunning. From her picturesque face to every movement she made was simply heart-stopping.

Suddenly as if noticing something, Irene arched her delicate eyebrows and her gaze shifted towards Simon. "You are staring. Is there something wrong" her crystal blue eyes reflected the dazed look of Simon.

Snapping back from his stupor, Simon cheekily stole a few more glances before shifting his eyes away as he laughed awkwardly. He had been caught staring at her. However, as fate had it, since

Simon hurriedly shifted his gaze away, he failed to see the slight look of embarrassment that momentarily appeared on the pretty face of Irene.

The next day, Simon was suddenly startled by an unexpected situation that suddenly emerged on his main floor. He walked out of his palace and ran towards the place where he felt the disturbance from.

Last night after the Forest Spring Spirit children filled their tummies with delicious food, they went back to sleep as their body was still too exhausted and battered.

Coming to the backyard of his palace, he was stunned to see the unexpected sight in front of him. The scene that lay in front of him was so astonishing and contrast from the usual that Simon didn't know where to start.

First off the pond of serenity that had clear sparkling water, now had a white mist surrounding and coming out of it. Speckles of mysterious lights danced around the pond and when Simon peered inside, he could see many sparkling gems and flowers at the bottom of the pond.

Secondly, the density of mana around the area was so thick that they became a foggy mist that drifted around the area. Simon had never seen the mystical energy that pervades every area of this world becoming so substantial as to form a mist.

Not only that, whenever he breathed inside the area, Simon could feel the thick density of manas, as well as the power inside him, becoming stronger and more active. Simon was sure that if he used magic inside the mist, the output would be much faster and stronger than what he could usually display.

Thirdly, the trees of mana which were previously fifty meters tall were now hundreds of meters tall. The leaves and branches of the trees were glowing, gathering and condensing the surrounding manas at a rapid speed.

The trees of mana were planted by Simon to increase the density of mana inside his dungeon. Increasing the density of mana very crucial in increasing the dungeon's rank. Not only that, many mysterious things and resources that are seen as treasures on the outside world, only grow in places where the mana is heavily concentrated.

The difference in the density of mana was also why higher-ranked dungeons provided more resources and treasure than what a low-rank dungeon could provide.

Feeling the sheer concentration of mana around the area, Simon couldn't help feeling excited. However, the next second it dawned on him and he became confused. No matter how incredible the growth buff provided by the pond of serenity was, this insane speed of growth was clearly unusual.

According to his estimates, it would have taken three to four months for the trees of mana to start growing and condensing mana from the air. But even then their growth wouldn't have been that exaggerated.

Carefully observing the area, Simon was sure that something must have happened while he was gone. Just when he was pondering over the question, Simon's gaze inadvertently went towards a scarlet crystal at the bottom of the pond.

The light of the scarlet crystal was so bright that it penetrated the fog and reached Simon who was above. "Hmm? What's that?" he glanced at the object with curiosity.

Since the pond of serenity had the highest concentration of mana, many mysterious objects have started growing at the bottom of it. The scarlet crystal was one of them. The mist covered the surface of the pond and hence Simon couldn't use analysis from here. If he wanted to know what it was he had to dive inside the pond.

Thinking for a while, Simon saw no harm in doing otherwise and quickly jumped inside the pond. SPLASH... the moment he jumped inside the pond, a frightening amount of energy rushed inside him through all his pores.

"Guh... bfftt" the energy was so pure and concentrated that he felt like lava was circulating inside his body. The pain was so excruciating that Simon felt like if he stayed inside any longer, he would be scorched. His pale white skin had already turned crimson from just staying inside the pond for a few seconds.

"Kuh... just a little more" swimming towards the scarlet crystal, he hurriedly grabbed it and rushed out of the pond. There were many other things at the bottom, but Simon did not have the peace of mind to Analyse all of it.

“Huff... huff... what is going on? The pond of serenity wasn’t supposed to be overbearing and contain such frightening energy!!” he looked at the pond with terrified eyes. At this moment, Irene’s clear voice rang out from behind him “How was the experience inside the pond?”.

Turning around, Simon saw Irene who had mysteriously appeared behind him. Making a bewildered face, he turned to look towards the pond again. The experience earlier was too shocking for him.

Aware of what he was thinking, Irene folded her hands across her ample chest and commented “The pond of serenity that you installed from the menu is no longer the same. After those changes, the pond contains a frightening amount of mystical energy that is deposited inside it through the earth. Even now the energy is still increasing and who knows what changes might occur in the future. All I know is that this pond of serenity might become one of your greatest assets and pillar for the dungeon”.

Even without Irene telling him, Simon understood that the pond of serenity had been greatly altered and had many mystical abilities. When he was inside the pond, an excruciating amount of energy circulated inside him but at the same time, he could also feel himself getting stronger.

It’s a pity that his current body was much too weak to go through such a baptism or else Simon would have chosen to stay inside the pond for a bit longer.

Though he was disappointed, he wasn’t discouraged. If he raised his stats and physical body to a level that could endure that terrifying amount of energy, he would be able to avail the mysterious features of the pond. That was how much of a potential the altered pond of serenity had.

Simon sensed the marvellous changes that had occurred inside his body by just dipping inside the pond for a few seconds and felt exhilarated.

Staring at the pond of serenity with her crystal blue eyes, Irene said “The pond of serenity will be a great help for you to increase your strength in the future. The mystical energy is far more concentrated here than what you get by simply defeating monsters and levelling up.”

“Not only that but it would also help in strengthening your physical body and skills”. Since even Analysis couldn’t tell her rank, Irene was far more knowledgeable than Simon.

Gazing at the pond of serenity covered in mist, Simon silently nodded at those words. Suddenly he remembered the scarlet crystal in his hand and shifted his gaze towards it. The crystal had an

irregular shape and fit perfectly in his hands. It was smooth to the touch and glossed just like a polished gem.

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The crystal had an irregular shape and fit perfectly in his hands. It was smooth to the touch and glossed just like a polished gem.

This gem was releasing a scarlet light from the bottom of the pond which had attracted his eyes and that was why he dived inside. Touching it all over, Simon felt the terrifying amount of energy through which it was formed.

Irene who was beside him, rest her gaze on the crystal that he was holding and just when he was about to use Analysis on it, Irene commented with a slight shock in her voice “Scarlet mutation crystal!”.

“Hmm? You know what this is?” Simon asked surprised by her knowledge.

Irene silently pondered for a moment before musing “The pond was able to form a Scarlet Mutation Crystal after a single day. The pond might even be more of a treasure than I thought”.

“Scarlet mutation crystal?” Simon furrowed his brows and used Analysis on the crystal, the name he got was exactly what Irene had described.

Scarlet Mutation Crystal grade [1]:- a [C] rank crystal formed from the condensation of vast mystical energy and contains an enormous fire attribute. The entity that assimilates with this crystal will be able to undergo a mutation of the fire attribute.

Simon was stunned by the information displayed by the Analysis. It turned out that this crystal was able to mutate any entity suitable enough to assimilate with it.

Mutation occurs when a variant bearing distinctive features is born from a race. The variant is always stronger than the standard ones and are also higher ranked.

Simon had even met one not too long ago. Gourd the Great Blood Ogre who was the subordinate of the Demon Viscount Gelgar was also a variant from the ogre race. The Great Blood Ogre was much stronger than the average ones from its tribe and he was even a rank above at [C] tier.

Simon was in a state of disbelief, the pond of serenity could not only assist him with his growth but also produce crystals such as the Scarlet Mutation Crystal. Though it was just a grade [1] [C] rank item, the mutation crystal was much precious than what its rank signifies.

He could use these crystals to mutate the spawned monsters of his dungeon making them even stronger.

A spawned monster's strength was restrained to the rank of the dungeon. The higher the rank of the dungeon, the powerful the monsters that can be spawned.

As of now, Simon's dungeon was still a low rank [D] tier dungeon and the monsters he could spawn were all weak. They were no match for anyone level 180 or higher. From a point of view of Demon Viscount, they can only be considered as nothing but cannon fodder.

However, it would be a different case if he used this scarlet mutation crystal to make his spawned monsters stronger. The monsters in his dungeon would no longer be constrained to the rank of his dungeon and would be able to mutate as a stronger species.

Although these crystals were precious, with time his pond of serenity would be able to produce even more and there was a possibility that a higher grade crystal could also be produced. The crystal in his hand was just a grade [1] which meant that there are other grades too.

The altered pond of serenity turned out to be a great treasure and Simon could finally see its value.

A [D] rank dungeon spawning mutated monsters. If word of this got out, everybody would be gobsmacked and pass it off as nothing but a lie. After all, mutated monsters only start appearing in dungeons above [C] rank. There was no way a low-rank dungeon and a newly emerged one at that would be having mutated monsters inside it.

It wasn't that the pond of serenity that Simon installed was special since all the dungeons [C] rank and above might already have dozens of it installed. However, the pond of serenity in his dungeon was not the same as theirs and had been altered greatly.

Simon welcomed all these changes but what confused him even more was how did these changes occur. The progress of his dungeon was going smoothly but it wasn't enough to warrant such great changes.

“What could it be?” as Simon pondered over the question, Irene gave a mysterious smile before dropping a hint.

“It might be someone with great potential in your dungeon that you recently picked up” She turned around and did not bother to explain anymore before disappearing just like how she appeared.

“Someone with great potential... is she talking about Cecilia? But didn't she say that her powers haven't awakened yet... could it be that her abilities have already started to manifest?” Simon recalled the miraculous healing ability of Cecilia's tears and was convinced.

Other than Cecilia who was a Forest Spring Royal Spirit, no other can bring about such exaggerated changes in his dungeon. Her powers to influence the nature was starting to display and it had already benefited his dungeon so much. He could only imagine what sorts of heaven-defying powers she would display after all of her abilities manifested.

Simon finally understood why Irene had such great expectations of Cecilia. It turns out Irene was already aware of the power of a Forest Spring Royal Spirit.

Although Simon would be lying if he said that he did not care, but even if he was given a choice to rescue a Cecilia that had no such power, he wouldn't hesitate to save her just like he did back then.

After examining the changes around the pond for a while, Simon decided to head back inside his palace.

By now, all the forest spring spirit children have awoken and were all jittery. How could they not be? After suffering at the hands of those adventurers, they were suddenly brought into this dungeon. They did not know what they should do or what would happen to them thus they were constantly on edge for what the future holds for them.

The only reason they weren't panicking was because the dungeon master has not treated them poorly after bringing them in and also because Cecilia trusted the other side.

When Simon entered the hall, he saw all of the children lining in attention as they anxiously stared at him. Seeing this scene, Simon gave an awkward laugh. Did they think this was some military drill and he was their instructor?

Forcing a cough, Simon thought of ways to dissolve this tension. Suddenly an idea struck. These children were on edge too much and need to relax. What better way to unwind all of your stress than a hot water bath.

Simon in his previous life used to be a big fan of a good bath until he started engrossing himself into perfecting the last game, the assignment he put his heart and soul into completing.

Even the palace that he had installed, was influenced by a hotel that he was fond of. The bath of the palace was big and wide, it could easily accommodate dozens of people at once.

Deciding on the action, he was just about to order the children to go take a bath, when he realized a problem. The palace only had one bath and amongst the twenty forest spring children, eight were boys and the remaining girls.

Thus he could only allow the girls to take a bath first while he had a chat with the boys. "I know you guys have a lot of questions and so do I but before that why don't you all take a relaxing bath first. Cecilia show these girls the way to the bath".

Cecilia readily nodded then suddenly tilted her head asking "What about the boys?".

Simon pointed at the boys before saying "They will take it after you guys finish with yours. Till then I would like to have a chat with them".

Since there was no reason to deny, Cecilia took all the girls and headed for the bath. Right after they headed out of the hall, Simon looked at the boys who were the only ones remaining. As he looked into their eyes he saw them glaring at him.

'Huh? Why are they glaring at me... could it be they wanted to bathe together? There is no way that's true right? They aren't mature enough to think about all those things. Then the only possibility is that... they are wary of me' Simon thought.

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'Huh? Why are they glaring at me... could it be they wanted to bathe together? There is no way that's true right? They aren't mature enough to think about all those things. Then the only possibility is that... they are wary of me' Simon thought.

Especially the boy named Jarred whose name he heard Cecilia mention once and who was the oldest one among them was blatantly glaring at him. It seems that the boy didn't trust him at all.

Well, Simon couldn't blame him after all the suffering he and his clansmen had gone through after the betrayal of one human they had brought inside their village.

Just when he was thinking about how to mask his words properly, Jarred spoke up first. "Why did you help us? What motive do you have behind saving Cecilia?... please don't say something as hypocritical as it was your duty or how could I leave a girl behind? I want to know the real reason".

As Simon thought this boy didn't believe a word that he had said earlier. Looking around, he could see all the boys having the same question flashing in their eyes.

Jarred stared at the demon who had saved them from their predicament go silent. The demon had taken care of all of them and even provided them with shelter and food. As far as he knew, it could also be a trap laid elaborately for them to let their guard down.

After what happened to their village, Jarred's thinking turned a total 180° and he didn't believe that there would be someone selfless who would help them with no strings attached.

The demon who was also the dungeon master of this dungeon opened his eyes and stared directly at his own. The crimson eyes of the demon gave chills down his spine and his body shuddered intensely. However, Jarred still resolutely matched the gaze of the demon and stared at the crimson eyes that could devour one's soul.

Simon found the determination of the boys praiseworthy and he couldn't help nod his head in approval. There was no such thing as a selfless person. Even if he told them the real reason was that he couldn't leave behind a heavily injured girl who was about to drown in her sorrow and sought help desperately, they wouldn't believe him.

That being the case, Simon just had to tell them the reason that would convince them.

"Of course the real reason I helped you guys was because of Cecilia. She is a royalty with a one in a million chance of being born in your race. As you can see I'm a dungeon master, there is no way I would leave this chance to gain a precious subordinate. There was no compelling reason for me to save you guys but since it would gain me her favour and loyalty I decided that it was worth bringing you here".

“As for your spirit orbs, I have no interest in these things that have been exaggerated by the people of this world as treasures. As long as you guys help me manage the dungeon you are safe”.

All of the boys had a stunned look on their faces after they heard the demon but at the same time, they looked convinced too. Since the demon believed that they were useful, he wouldn't hurt or plot against them.

Especially since he was trying to win the favour of Cecilia.

Once they knew the reason and were satisfied with it, they finally came to terms and relaxed.

If the demon was speaking the truth, he would keep them as subordinates and in return, they had to manage the dungeon for him. If they did a good job, they might even be able to live a peaceful life inside the dungeon.

In the end, they were children after all. They didn't realise that Simon didn't have to do all those roundabout things if he wanted to harm them or plunder their spirit orbs. They were a race unsuitable for combat, how could they be a match for Simon? The only reason he saved and sheltered them was because he took pity in their plight.

Since they were satisfied with his reasoning, Simon didn't have to explain anymore. Now then it was his turn to ask the question.

“What I want to ask is that the lot of you are the only ones that survived from your village?” his question immediately turned the mood in the hall sombre. Some of the boys even had a look of anguish whenever they recalled the scenes from back then.

How those cruel adventurers laughed as they massacred their village, their parents who gave their lives away to save them. The memories were so bad that they wanted to forget them if possible.

Even Jarred who was the oldest amongst the boys, had an agonizing face whenever those memories flashed in his mind.

Simon knew that the question would bring their bad memories; however, he had to know if there were others from their village who had survived. It would be best if there was any adult amongst

them after all, the forest spring spirits that he had saved were all children less than seven years of age.

A presence of an elder is needed to educate and guide these children. These forest spring spirits were young and were not even aware of the abilities that made each of them a [B] rank according to the result of his Analysis.

Simon couldn't guide them since he wasn't from the same race and as for Irene, well she had her own mysteries and might be able to guide them. However, that would consume all of her time and she would not be able to perform her duties as one of the Guardians of the dungeon.

Plus the children might not be willing to listen to her since Irene wasn't a Forest Spring Spirit. That left only Cecilia but she herself was in the stage of awakening her powers so how can she help the others?

If any other forest spring spirits managed to survive the massacre, Simon wanted to bring them into his dungeon. As for whether they would be willing or not, Simon would think of that later.

Finally, one of the boys decided to answer his question as the boy nodded fiercely and said "Our race is protected by the Ancient Treants. My parents once told me that if a calamity befalls us, the treants are duty-bound to protect us".

"The ruler of the Ancient Treants lives deep within the territory and according to rumours possesses the power to even trample a country single-handedly. I think some of our clansmen ran towards the depth of the forest thinking that the ruler of the Ancient Treants would protect us".

Simon nodded, surprised by the knowledge of the boy. It seemed that some of the Forest Spring Spirits ran towards the Ancient Treants territory.

'The Ancient Treants territory huh' Simon mused. If that was true then it made the situation rather difficult. He had tangled with the Elder Treants once in the place where he found Cecilia unconscious and knew how strong they were.

Plus Simon had to use all of his energy and even resort to using his amalgamation magic just to penetrate the unimaginable defence and healing of the Elder Treants. Although those treants were sitting atop a mystical vein, it would be just an excuse if he said they weren't strong.

Ancient Treants were the next evolution of Elder Treants and were dozens of times and maybe even more powerful. There was now stronger ones would be roaming at the edge of the territory. That is to say, if he encountered a strong Ancient Treant, he wouldn't be able to progress any further and would have to retreat.

The territory of the Ancient Treants was located in the western region of the Ghastly Winding Forest where only the strongest monsters lived. As for the ruler of the Ancient Treants, Simon suspected that it might be one of the seven kings of the west.

Similar to how the northern region of the forest had the three overlords such as the Earth Splitting Lower Dragon, the western region which was the strongest and the biggest region had its own territorial rulers.

However, it didn't mean that the Seven Kings and the Three overlords were on the same level. Previously when Simon explored a tiny portion of the western region, he became aware of the colossus presences deep inside the forest that were the Seven Kings.

Each of these kings monitored their own territory and didn't interfere with the others until unless their territory is intruded upon. In a way, these Seven Kings have formed a balance that kept each other in check.

From their standpoint, the three overlords were nothing but children playing house. The presence of these Seven kings was what made the Ghastly Winding Forest so dangerous that the surrounding kingdom didn't dare to invade.

If the ruler of the ancient treants was one of them, then intruding on their territory would be quite reckless.

Simon audibly sighed. He didn't have any other choice but to give up on this matter. The existence on the level of the Seven Kings was far beyond the current him.

After the girls, it was the boys turn to bathe. After all of them took a good refreshing bath, they all gathered in one of the halls downstairs.

It seemed that his idea had worked as the children who had entered the bath were much more relaxed and less wary of him. It might even be the work of Cecilia who had somehow convinced them.

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“Big brother... what’s the matter?” Cecilia noticed that her big brother was lost in thought as he made a difficult expression.

Simon who was indulging in his thoughts snapped out of it after he was called out.

“It’s nothing...” just when he was about to dismiss the issue, he thought about Cecilia’s lineage and thought of a possibility that might help him enter the territory of the Ancient Treants. He believed that she might be able to aid him in that regard.

Although it was just a possibility, it was worth a try. Simon explained the situation and told her his idea of bringing the rest of her clansmen inside the dungeon.

Cecilia’s eyes widened in surprise when she heard that Simon was planning to bring the other clansmen who have survived inside the dungeon. As far as she knew, some of her clansmen were able to escape since her mother paved the way for them by self-destructing her spirit orb.

She didn’t know what happened to those who escaped inside the territory of Ancient Treants. Whether they successfully ran away from their pursuers... she couldn’t tell since even her group of escapees which consisted of so many Forest Spring Spirits failed to escape.

Though the possibility was slim, Cecilia wanted to believe that some of her clansmen were successful in their escape and under the protection of the Ancient Treants. Thinking so Cecilia finally made her decision “Let me come along with you big brother”.

In one area of the western region of the Ghastly Winding Forest, humungous trees with branches so long that they even covered the very expanse of sky, densely packed the area.

The foliage was so thick that not even a ray of light could pass through. The only source of light was the mushrooms and moss growing in the area shining with multi-coloured lights.

Mysterious plants and herbs grew everywhere and not even a trace of monsters could be seen in the area.

Simon with Cecilia in tow passed through one area after another. The deeper he went, the stronger the foreboding feeling became. It was as if thousands of pairs of eyes were watching him from every corner. And to confirm his suspicions, they had been walking for quite a while and had not even encountered a single treant.

Simon's instinct told him that something was up; nonetheless, he continued marching forward. If worst comes to worst, he could just carry Cecilia and dash out of here.

Suddenly, the path ahead of them opened and a gigantic Ash-black tree blocked their path. "Big brother... that tree..." Cecilia who was beside him tugged his clothes and said in concern.

Even while just standing there, the humongous Ash-black tree emitted a heavy and sturdy pressure. However, even without her warning, he could tell that the gigantic tree ahead was no ordinary tree.

It was an Ancient Treant that had lived for quite a long time.

How could he tell? That was because the Analysis was barely able to show its race and level. A level 541 Ancient Treant was blocking his path.

From the surface, the tree just looked massively big with no other features to speak off. But to Simon, the tree seemed unmovable like a mountain. Its Ash-black bark seemed ancient and withered, but make no mistake its defence was so high that one look and Simon was aware that all the magic in his repertoire wouldn't even scratch it.

Suddenly the earth trembled and all the surrounding trees started swaying. The trunk of the humongous tree cracked open and two dark green eyes came into view.

The moment its eyes opened, a pressure so heavy that it suffocated Simon emanated out of the Ancient Treant. Cold sweat trickled down his body and all his sense were in full alert ready to make a move from the slightest disturbance.

As of now, there was still too wide a gap between them and Simon knew that if the Ancient Treant decided to become hostile, he would have no choice but to run away at full speed.

The eyes of the treant shined with a green light as they inspected the two of them. Even though he said two of them, the eyes of the Ancient Treant was only focused on Cecilia. Moments later, the trunk of the treant cracked open once again and a huge spiny mouth appeared.

“I am Balsa, one of the loyal servants of the Ancient Titan Treant. Young lady... we are ordered by our king to protect any Forest Spring Spirits coming here to seek help. Others from your race are already in our care. This is the territory of the Ancient Titan Treant, you need not fear anymore”.

An old voice like a bell sounded out across the forest.

Cecilia immediately got excited when she heard what the Ancient Treant named Balsa said.

She was relieved that some of her clansmen managed to escape and were safe. With hopes lighting up in her eyes she pleaded.

“L-Lord Balsa can I see my clansmen who are under your care? After our village was massacred, those who managed to escape were pursued by humans. I don’t know how many of them managed to survive. They must be worried about others, I wish to see and talk to them”.

Simon was standing on the side, since he didn’t want to intrude, he could just silently listen to their conversation.

The old voice of Balsa sounded once again “You don’t need to add Lord. Since your Forest Spring Spirit clan is a friend of our king, you don’t need to address me as such. Just Balsa is fine. As the loyal servant of my king I’m content with just that”.

Right after saying that, the Ancient treant went silent for a while before the trees started mysteriously moving and creating a path. It appeared that Balsa was communicating with the surrounding trees.

However, the scene raised goosebumps all across Simon. His Analysis was continuously flaring, alerting him of the presence of multiple treants all around him.

The trees he thought ordinary, were actually treants that were hiding their presence. It was only now that he realised that they were being led towards Balsa. Even with his acute senses, he wasn’t able to detect the presence of treants who were masking themselves as ordinary trees.

His body couldn’t help but shudder when the realization struck him.

After what felt like a few minutes, a new path had been opened that led deeper towards the territory of the Ancient Treants.

“If you follow the path from here, you would be able to reach the place where your clansmen are young lady. It just so happens to be the safest place in the entire Ghastly Winding Forest since our king also resides there. Because your race has the favour of our king, all the treants in this forest will protect you. Even if we must lay our lives down in the process” Balsa said, his voice full of reverence whenever he talked about his king.

“Many thanks, elder. I will take my leave now and go meet with my clansmen. Our Forest spring spirit clan will never forget this favour” Cecilia said as she tugged Simon and followed the path that was created for them.

However, just when they took a few steps, the old voice of Balsa sounded once again.

“Stop”.

Halting their steps, Simon and Cecilia turned towards the humungous Ancient Treant.

Cecilia asked respectfully “Is there something wrong elder?”. She didn’t know why the elder would stop them midway.

Balsa looked at Cecilia before his huge green eyes landed on Simon as he said, “You may pass, but the demon must go back”.

Both Cecilia and Simon were stunned.

Creasing her delicate brows, Cecilia asked respectfully “I don’t understand elder. This person is my big brother who has saved my life and is simply here to protect me. There shouldn’t be any problem for him to meet my clansmen along with me”.

Her tone even had a smear of anger as she insisted. However, The Ancient Treant named Balsa simply denied her.

“I cannot allow that. The king has only permitted the Forest Spring Spirit race to pass. The demon must go back. As for the matter of protection, you can be assured that as long as you are inside the

ancient treants territory, nothing in this entire Ghastly Winding Forest can harm you. We treants are much more powerful than the likes of demon beside you”.

The old voice of Balsa was filled with superiority that looked down on Simon. Why wouldn't he? The demon in front of him was just a weakling and he on the other hand was a level 541 Ancient Treant more than two thousand years old.

And more than that, he took pride in being one of the loyal servants under the Ancient Titan Treant.

Simon panicked for a second thinking that the odd feeling originating from his pride fragment whenever someone slighted him, would take control of his emotions once again. Fortunately, the fragment didn't trigger.

It seemed that comment of that level wasn't enough to activate the pride fragment. This on the contrary made Simon wonder what the bottom line was to trigger the fragment.

Although Simon wasn't affected by that remark, the same couldn't be said for Cecilia. Anger flashed deep within her eyes when her big brother who had lent her a helping hand during her most desperate times and had been so nice to her and her clansmen, was looked down upon by someone they had just met.

Chapter 146: Manifest

Anger flashed deep within her eyes when her big brother who had lent her a helping hand during her most desperate times and had been so nice to her and her clansmen, was looked down upon by someone they had just met.

How could she just take it lying down? Stomping her foot, she pointed at Balsa and angrily declared “Don't look down on my big brother. He is tens... no hundreds of times more stronger than any of you. I don't need you all to protect me... just my big brother is enough”.

Her angry face wouldn't even be able to scare off a mosquito. It doesn't matter if she was a Forest Spring Royal Spirit, in the end, she was just a five years old girl.

A child was always honest and upfront with their emotions, the same goes for Cecilia.

Simon who was beside her couldn't help but force out an awkward laugh. Although the painful truth was the current him was no match for that Balsa and in a frontal fight he would be squashed like an ant, he still felt happy that Cecilia had such strong faith in him.

However, spouting all that didn't mean that it would help in this situation and Simon was correct. Instead of making the situation any better, those words from her made the situation even worse.

Balsa the ancient treant after hearing Cecilia burst into laughter which echoed all across the floor. "Young Lady you shouldn't be so impatient as to reject our protection. Since our king has ordered us to protect you lot, then we shall protect you no matter if you like it or not. As for the demon over there, I cannot be bothered by it any further. If he wants to live, he will return back otherwise don't blame me for bullying the weak".

He was after all a loyal guard serving under the Ancient Titan Treant, there was no way he put the words of a child to heart, much less confront with a demon he had deemed to be as weak as an ant.

"Uhhhhnnn" Cecilia stared hatefully at the Ancient Treant as she ground her teeth. She had been truly and utterly angered by this treant.

Simon who was quietly listening by the sidelines was also having a difficult time. His objective for coming here was to meet with the Forest Spring Spirits that have survived and if possible convince them to come to his dungeon.

If he couldn't even enter, this trip of theirs would end up as waste. Not to mention he would have to change his future plans based on whether he could enter or not.

If possible, Simon really wanted to enter; but at the same time, he didn't want to make enemies with these incredibly powerful Ancient Treants. Unlike the Elder Treants who were classified as simple monsters, the Ancient Treants were highly sentient and were capable of human thoughts.

Not only that but these treants had protected and sheltered the weak forest spring spirits that have escaped from the clutches of the adventurers.

That act alone was enough to tell Simon that they weren't an awful bunch who suppressed the weak. He wanted to befriend them or have a cordial relation with them at the least.

"I must see my clansmen but at the same time, I cannot leave my big brother behind. Since your king is on friendly terms with our race, you must believe me. I can guarantee his nature. If you are still not willing then I will speak to that king of yours and tell him how rude you were to me".

Saying that, Cecilia crossed her arms and made a cunning smile.

“Hnn... hnn... If you don’t want to get beaten by your king then let me and my big brother pass. Or else don’t blame me for adding some lies when I talk to him later on”.

Simon who was listening to their back and forth was shocked. It seemed that Cecilia finally had it enough and decided to outright blackmail the Ancient Treant instead.

How could the coercion of this level work on Balsa who had lived for more than two thousand years? If he fell for that wouldn’t he have lived a long life for nothing?

When he heard what Cecilia said, the Ancient Treant laughed out in laughter once again. “Hahaha, It will not be as easy as you think to meet our king young lady. Be that as it may, even if the king decides to beat me up for this offence, I will gladly take it. For there is no better reward for me other than to be graced by the presence of the king himself”.

It seemed that Balsa was quite the devoted servant. Even Simon got curious as to how great the ruler of the Ancient Treants was to have such a devote follower.

TREMBLE... TREMBLE...

The next moment, the very ground started to shake as the humongous branches of the Ancient Treant started to creak and move. A solid pressure akin to a mountain thousands of meters big engulfed Simon and made him almost bend his knee.

Pointing his huge sharp branches at the demon following beside the Forest Spring Spirit, Balsa declared.

“Only the Forest Spring Spirit girl may pass. There can be no exception. Young lady, you should think carefully. If you still insist on bringing this demon along with you, then I will have no choice but to crush him here and now”.

“Listen carefully... this is the territory of the Ancient Treants, demon nobles like you aren’t allowed to trespass here”.

The pressure engulfing him was palpable and every bone in his body made slight creaking noises. It had completely slipped from his mind. Since the Ancient Treant named Balsa created a path for them and was friendly enough to chat, Simon totally forgot that he was still in a territory that may become hostile to him any second.

The ruler of the Ancient Treants ordered to protect the Forest Spring Spirits, it didn't count those that were along with them. Especially when they were being hunted down by humans. It was natural to not allow any intruders.

Simon was in quite a dilemma. After he heard from that forest spring spirit boy that the Ancient treants were duty-bound to protect the Forest Spring Spirit clan in their need, he thought that bringing one of them along would help him get inside their territory.

However, it seems that he was being too naive. The treants appeared to be quite territorial and didn't allow the presence of species other than the Forest Spring Spirits near them.

The situation was quite difficult. On one hand he wanted to meet with Cecilia's clansmen that had survived and on the other hand, were the Ancient Treants that are protecting them. Since they didn't allow his presence, he couldn't force the issue. At the same time, he couldn't just leave Cecilia alone in the territory of the Ancient Treants.

When he took her in as his little sister, he promised to protect her. Then again, seeing how hopeful she was after she knew that some of her clansmen had survived and were inside, he couldn't just take her back with him.

This whole time, Cecilia was tightly holding onto his clothes refusing to leave his side. While Simon was lost in his thoughts, Balsa the Ancient Treant thought that the demon was adamant on refusing his offer and decided to make his move.

His old voice rang out as he said "It seems you have made your decision. Then don't blame me for bullying the weak. I initially left you a way out but it looks like you are determined to refuse the toast. That being so I shall bury you here myself".

Ash-black spikes started protruding out from its humongous branches and locked onto Simon. Each of these spikes were more than five meters long and glimmered with a terrifying sharpness.

A pressure so heavy that the surrounding ground cracked bore down on Simon. His knees trembled but even then, he refused to bow down.

“Ahhh~~...” Cecilia who was tightly clinging onto his clothes was carried away by the sudden wind hundreds of meters away. The wind didn’t hurt her in the slightest and just restricted her movement like a prison.

“No don’t hurt big brother. We will go back, I don’t want to meet with my clansmen anymore. So please let him go”.

Cecilia had a face that was masked with dread as she looked at the struggling Simon. Though she was not under the Ancient Treant’s aura but looking at his expression, she could tell that her big brother was being pressured by Balsa aura.

It’s true that she wanted to meet her clansmen very badly but not at the cost of her big brother’s life. To her, it looked like the elder had snapped out because of her taunts and if she said sorry, everything would be alright.

However, no matter how many times she said sorry, the Ancient Treant didn’t appear to loosen his pressuring aura on Simon.

“I cannot do as you say young lady. Since it’s our king’s wish to protect every Forest Spring Spirit, I can’t let you go back now that you are here. You must stay here with your clansmen under our protection”.

“From his orders, I can infer that the king holds your race very dear. Who knows when you will get killed if you stick with that demon... it might even make our king sad. From what I can see, that demon isn’t strong enough to protect you” Balsa declared in a voice devoid of emotions.

Chapter 147: Manifest (2)

“Since it’s our king’s wish to protect every Forest Spring Spirit, I can’t let you go back now that you are here. You must stay here with your clansmen under our protection”.

“No... no...” tears started welling in Cecilia’s eyes and just when she was about to cry, Simon’s voice that had an added depth of anger, rang out.

“Cecilia don’t cry... nor do you have to say sorry anymore. You did nothing wrong. The situation is not as bad as you think”.

This treant had been continuously looking down on him from the start, he could endure that. But when the damn treant made his little sister cry, as her brother how could he take it anymore?

Simon finally snapped as anger flashed within the depths of his eyes. If that piece of old tree thought that it could kill him and make his sister stay here, he was up for a rude awakening. Even if he can't kill that damn treant, unleashing his full strength he could still bring her along and escape from here.

In the first place, their power lied in their strength and defence, they were a race blessed with tough hides and superior defence but were extremely slow and their movement was extremely restricted.

Flashing a fearless smile towards Cecilia, he stated "If I don't want to stay here, no one will be able to stop me".

Cecilia stopped her tears from welling and nodded; however, she still didn't look convinced.

"Hoho... no one will be able to stop you? You have quite a big mouth for a demon. Very well then let me experience how you will escape today from my grasp" the old voice of Balsa was full of conceit and mockery.

BOOM...

The surrounding air visibly shook, the invisible pressure boring down on Simon intensified and spiderweb-like cracks appeared on the ground for a few meters around him.

Simon just flashed a mocking smile in return. ' Want to restrain me with just your aura? Fat chance'. Activating the skills [Super Strength], [Super Endurance], [Body Enhancement] he resisted the pressure without backing down.

The moment he activated all those skills at once, the pressure on him suddenly felt a lot less restraining.

"Hohh, it seems like you are somewhat able to resist the pressure from my aura. Is it because you are a demon noble? However, it is still not enough to escape from here" Balsa said.

The hundreds of spikes on his branches emitted a shallow green light before swiftly shooting towards Simon.

“Haaaaaaaahhh” when Simon perceived the danger, he gave a demonic yell and was just about to activate his trump card [Ancestral Symbol Ignition], when an emerald green light started radiating out of Cecilia.

The green light was so piercing that it instantly covered a few miles in an instant and spread towards the other part of the forest. The spikes that were shooting towards him, was engulfed by that green light and silently faded away.

Looking at this scene, Simon was shocked, Balsa was the same.

After seeing that his attack had been easily dissipated by the emerald green light, he couldn't help being stunned. However, the fact that astonished him was when the emerald green light brushed through him, he suddenly had this indescribable desire to bend and worship.

‘How can that be? In all my life I have only bent myself to servitude only before the king. How can I have such thoughts?’ his mind ran rampant as Balsa had a hard time believing what he saw.

Cecilia when she saw the Ancient Treant attacking her big brother, she became anxious. Although she had confidence that Simon won't lose, she didn't want to see him get hurt.

To make matters even worse, the Ancient Treant decided to make her stay here under the protection of the Ancient Treants which finally made Simon snap. The situation escalated so fast that even before she could do anything, both the parties were ready to fight.

When she saw Balsa create thousands of spikes out of his branches she finally became desperate. Though she wasn't a combatant, she could still clearly feel the terrifying amount of natural energy that each of the spikes contained within.

She was helpless, she could only stand on the sidelines and watch her big brother fight alone. Cecilia didn't want that and so she prayed. Her calls were so strong that the mysterious speckles of light surrounding her, immediately answered her call.

The power sleeping deep within her, like an awakened beast, erupted with a vast ocean like power as an emerald green light erupted out of her and quickly spread towards the surrounding lands.

The moment the emerald green light shined, the forest became vibrant, all the surrounding treants bowed in reverence as if in the presence of a deity.

It wasn't like the treants wanted to bow before Cecilia but because the natural energy with the emerald green light was so pure that they subconsciously followed their instincts. That vast power felt like an ocean grand and endless when it swept through them.

It was as if they were in presence of a being that was in a completely different realm than them and in front of it they felt just like an ant. It wasn't just the ordinary treants. Even the Ancient Treants that were dozens of miles away, felt a similar presence and a feeling of devotion rose within their heart.

Not to mention Balsa who was right in front of Cecilia who experienced that same power extremely clearly.

Whoosh...

the gale magic which was restricting her, swiftly dissipated and Cecilia landed on the ground stunned by the sudden change in the situation.

"Eh? What going on?" opening her eyes, she looked around her surroundings and saw that everything was still. However, she didn't delve much into it and hurriedly ran towards Simon. As long as her big brother was fine, she didn't have to worry about anything.

As she approached Simon she saw that even he had a look of astonishment as he stared at her. Blinking her crystal green eyes, she examined Simon and asked in concern.

"Big brother are you alright? Are you hurt somewhere?"

It took a huge effort for Simon to snap out of his daze as he awkwardly looked at the stupefied treants.

Balsa the Ancient Treant pointed at Cecilia with his whole body shuddering and asked "Young lady, what was that power right now? What did you just do?"

The power that came out of her was clearly unusual. To make an Ancient Treant like himself instinctively revere someone, even his king; the Ancient Titan Treant couldn't do it. However, no matter how he probed her now, he didn't feel the slightest presence of that majestic energy on her again.

What was going on? Just as he was lost in his thoughts, the earth shook once again, but this time the whole Ancient treant territory that spanned for hundreds of miles trembled.

The thick roots like a dense network that interconnected with the ground below lit up with a green light. A heavy Ancient voice that seemed to have come from aeons ago, along with a gentle gust of wind reverberated across the whole territory.

"Balsa... let those two pass. I wish to meet with the exalted one that had released such pure natural energy. Hahaha, this ancient one will be awaiting your presence. Nobody is to make things difficult for them. They have my permission to come and go as they please within my territory".

Right after saying that, the trembling of the earth and the green light that interconnected the roots inside the earth, disappeared along with the voice.

The ancient Treant named Balsa who heard the voice immediately restrained his aura and bowed its humongous body respectfully. Nonetheless, he was inwardly quite shocked. Even the ruler of Ancient Treants had addressed the young lady as an exalted personage and showed her such favour.

Balsa didn't dare to disobey a command from his king. His gaze fell on Cecilia and he couldn't help but wonder what was the identity of the young lady? Surely she wasn't some ordinary Forest Spring Spirit. Though he was curious, he knew better than to inquire.

Simon and Cecilia were also amazed by that ancient voice that came from the depth of the forest. A voice that had such prestige and power to make these treants submit surely had to be above even those Ancient Treants.

Simon guessed that the voice came from the ruler of the Ancient Treants himself. Since the ruler of the ancient treants interfered, he didn't have to worry anymore about these treants going hostile against him.

Now he can meet with the Forest Spring Spirits along with Cecilia without any trouble. Simon looked at Cecilia who was tightly clenching his clothes and couldn't help but pat her head lovingly.

“It looks like your powers had saved me back there... thank you Cecilia”.

Cecilia was confused by his words and blinked “Eh? I saved big brother? But I was helpless and couldn’t do anything other than pray”.

Simon stared at Cecilia crystal green eyes and nodded his head. It seems he was right. Cecilia power was starting to manifest though very inconspicuously that even she didn’t feel it.

Simon didn’t want her to rush with the process so he didn’t tell her anything. As time passes, she would become aware of the power hidden deep within her body and know about her existence in more detail.

He didn’t know whether the awakening of her powers would change Cecilia but he hoped that she would still remain the same.

Chapter 149: Forest Spring Spirits (2)

The Forest Spring Spirits wanted to express their gratitude some more as they surrounded Simon. At this time, grandpa Fennel stepped forward and said “Why are you all still not inviting the benefactor inside? Is this how our Forest Spring Spirit Clan shows their thanks?”.

His voice woke up the crowding villagers as they hurriedly tried to invite him inside. Simon was helpless as he was pulled inside by these many people and had no choice but to tag along.

Forest Spring Spirits were a peaceful race by nature and were never hostile to any beings. They harvested the gifts of nature and lived a life of seclusion. Showing favour to this race in their time of need was akin to earning their eternal gratitude and friendship.

Cecilia smiled as she saw how friendly her clansmen were being to her big brother.

Grandpa Fennel who was beside her nodded his head and said “The heavens were watching you to have ordained your meeting with a person like him. You were truly lucky. Since he has taken you as his little sister, he must really care for you to protect you to this extent”.

Looking at Cecilia who was intently listening, he lovingly patted her head and said “You have taken a wonderful person as your big brother. Make sure you take care of him”.

“Grandpa doesn’t have to worry I’ll take good care of him. Besides big brother has a beautiful wife who worries about him so much hehe” Cecilia enthusiastically nodded.

Fennel agreed, it was natural for a man of that calibre to have a loving wife. He smiled and said “Let’s go in, we have much more to catch up with”.

Inside one of the bamboo house, Simon was crowded by the Forest Spring Spirit people as he was showered by their gratitude and appreciation for him. Since they wanted to hear it from his mouth, he recounted how he saved those children who were enslaved by those adventurers back in their village and sheltered them in his dungeon.

These children that he had saved were the last hope of the Forest Spring Spirits and some of them might even be their own child or relative.

Simon was finally accepted as someone who they can put their trust on. As he was chatting with them, he suddenly recalled the peculiar ring that he confiscated from Laris. The ring had a function similar to his inventory and was able to store things.

The ring that he was talking about was the exact ring that Laris had used to store the spirit orbs that he plundered from them. Though it was valuable for others, it held no meaning for Simon.

These spirit orbs rightfully belonged to the people from the Forest Spring Spirit clan. It was the last remains of their people for which their whole clan was hunted down.

Simon planned to give it back to them. He looked towards the elder named Fennel and passed the ring containing the spirit orbs to him.

“This is...?” Fennel was confused.

“This is the ring I confiscated from the man responsible for the crusade in your village. It stores the spirit orbs of your people that they plundered. Elder, I return it back to you” Simon said with sincerity.

All the Forest Spring Spirits that were inside the house were stunned. They were well aware of how much allure their spirit orbs was to the other races. It was because of the existence of this very orb that others considered as treasures, their village was mercilessly subjugated. As they recalled those scenes from back then, the mood in the house became sombre once again.

The spirit orb was the core of the Forest Spring Spirit race that contains the essence of the nature. To others whether man or beast, a spirit orb is a precious treasure that can improve their bloodline and allow them to reach a whole new level.

During the ancient times, their race was quite thriving and they didn't live a life of seclusion like today. However, all of that changed when the other races came to know about the existence of the spirit orbs within them.

They were cruelly killed and subdued for their spirit orbs. For the Forest Spring Spirit race, it was a dark history.

It was only after a long never-ending nightmare, that during the second Apex War, the Dragon Lords decided to bind the people of this world with a treaty that punished anyone who hunted races such as the Forest Spring Spirits.

These people had only seen others taking the spirit orbs away, not the other way round. So when Simon returned back the spirit orbs of their people that were plundered from them, how would they not be shocked?

For a while, they even believed that Simon didn't know about the ability that these spirit orbs had. However, they quickly discarded that thought. Even if someone did know what benefits the spirit orbs can provide, one look and anyone could easily guess that they were not some ordinary item.

So why was Simon returning it back to them? Did he not lust over these spirit orbs? Or was he just pretending to be someone noble? The Forest Spring Spirit didn't have an answer.

Fennel who was passed the ring containing the spirit orbs that the adventurers plundered from their people, stared directly at Simon's eyes. It was as if he wanted to see through Simon, his thought process and whether he had any ulterior motives behind it.

But no matter how he looked, Simon's eyes seemed to be sincere and without mirth or deceit.

Could it be that the spirit orbs was meaningless to him? Grandpa Fennel looked at Cecilia who was currently beaming from the righteous action of her big brother. He couldn't help but shake his head. 'It seems that after that tragedy, I have become quite paranoid. So there are still virtuous people like him out there' Fennel thought as he nodded his head in approval.

“Sir benefactor are you truly willing to give these spirit orbs back to us? Do know how much of value these orbs are... they can bestow you with power and allow you to reach heights that you wouldn’t even think was previously possible. Even then are you willing to return it? You should think about it one more time, I believe you are aware of the abilities that these spirit orbs can bestow you” Fennel said with an ambiguous expression.

All the Forest Spring Spirits inside had a dark and gloomy face. They were all aware of how much allure their spirit orbs is to others. In a world where your future limits and ability is dictated by your bloodline, having a chance to improve one’s bloodline had an endless appeal to everyone.

How could the demon not know this? They all believed that Simon would stay true to his race and keep the spirit orbs back.

Cecilia, on the other hand, looked at Simon with expectation, she knew and believed in her big brother who even while knowing how special her royal spirit orbs was, rejected the thought process of plundering it from her.

However, this and that was different. Simon was now given a choice by the elder of their clan to keep the spirit orbs with him or return it back as he initially wanted to.

“Big brother...” she wanted to say something but failed to come out of her.

Simon looked at Cecilia and smiled. The forest Spring Spirit race never would have guessed that although the spirit orbs had an endless allure to others, they were meaningless to Simon. He had his [Main Menu] with him which allowed him to surpass the limitation placed on him due to the impurity of his bloodline.

As long as he was not dead and had the will to get stronger, there was no wall that he couldn’t surpass in the future.

Simon wasn’t angry at the provocative tone of the elder’s speech nor how he was questioning his character. He knew that Fennel was trying to test and see through his character. He had no regret giving up these spirit orbs back to them and that was the truth.

Simon replied, his face earnest “Elder must be joking. How can I go back on my words? These spirit orbs belong to the people of your clan, I dare not hoard it. The moment I got these from the leader of those adventurers, I was planning to return them.”

“As for the ability and power contained within these spirit orbs, I am well aware. However, it is only one of the means to get stronger, there are several other ways. I, Simon have my own ways to get stronger other than by relying on these spirit orbs. Elder can rest assured, I have no desire towards them whatsoever”.

All the people inside the bamboo house were stunned. They never thought that the demon who Cecilia had taken as her big brother, would be so sincere. He would rather have their friendship over the chance to get the spirit orbs.

Even if Simon had chosen to keep the spirit orbs with him, they would have no complaints since he was the one to retrieve them back in the first place. But his actions to return it back to them, have earned their full trust.

Aunt Daphne had tears glimmering in her eyes as she glanced at Cecilia who had a prideful expression on her face. It was only now that she understood why Cecilia was so attached to this demon.

Chapter 150: Aldebaran

Grandpa Fennel had a face that seemed to say that he was defeated, but the smile on his face said something else. He had an appreciative look whenever he glanced at Simon and couldn't help but acknowledge him genuinely.

The demon was worthy of their trust, not to mention that he was already their benefactor. Fennel could only thank the heavens for sending such a person to them.

Fennel bowed his head deeply and said his thanks to Simon. He was the only remaining elder of the Forest spring spirit clan and it was his duty to show his gratitude on behalf of his clan.

“I cannot tell you how grateful all of us are for you to lend us your help. Without you, sir benefactor our clan would have no hope left alive. Please let me express my thanks” Fennel said as he bowed his body so deeply that it could almost touch the ground.

Simon was not used to this mannerism of others bowing to him as he tried to stop the elder. To his surprise, all the members of the forest spring spirit clan were similarly deeply bowing their heads towards him.

Seeing that it was no use to stop them, he could only sigh in resignation and allow the Forest Spring Spirits to show their gratitude.

“Everyone please raise your heads. You are making this quite awkward for me. Since I have taken Cecilia as my little sister, it was only natural for me to save her clansmen or else she would always be a crybaby” Simon said with an awkward laugh.

When Cecilia heard what Simon said, she immediately stomped her foot and retorted back “How rude big brother! I am not a crybaby”.

She pouted her lips and burned with fury. Their exchange immediately lightened the mood in the place and even got some laughs from the bystanders.

Even aunt Daphne laughed when she saw Cecilia immediately throw a fit when she was called a crybaby. She was relieved that Cecilia’s scar was being healed and she was still able to retain her previous personality.

Aunt Daphne couldn’t bear to guess Cecilia, a five-year-old girl must have gone through after seeing everybody dear to her sacrificing themselves to save her. If it wasn’t for Sir benefactor that Cecilia had found in between her escape, she would have probably even forgotten how to smile.

She was her own niece that is to say Cecilia’s mother and Daphne were blood sisters. Cecilia was like her own child and she couldn’t be anymore happier to see her smile and get angry just like back in that village.

Daphne and a few others served plates of food for Cecilia and their benefactor and were relishing on the happy memories.

Simon was quite troubled as all of them wanted him to try out all of the dishes that they had prepared for him. Although he was a heavy eater, he wasn’t a glutton capable enough to finish multiple plates of these foods and to make matters worse, they were still preparing some more.

It seemed that these people wanted to have a banquet. Simon had to admit that the cuisine of the Forest Spring spirits was quite delicious as everything was prepared out of trees and plants.

The vegetables and fruits were quite different from what grew on earth and to Simon looked quite strange. For example, a fruit that tasted like a banana had a shape similar to an apple but was yellow in colour.

A fruit that looked like grapes had the taste of watermelon. There were even some fruits and vegetables which he had never tasted before but was so delicious that Simon couldn't help but eat some more.

Looking at all the different types of food lining the table, he couldn't help but be reminded once again that he was on a different planet.

It seemed that the Forest Spring Spirits that were hiding here, were finally able to let loose some of their worries after they saw Cecilia return safely with the message that there were still some children from their clan alive and in safe hands.

"It's quite good" tasting the wine that forest spring spirits had served him, Simon uttered. The wine in the glass was made out of some unknown fruit and was very much to his taste.

"Hahaha, Sir benefactor I'm glad that you like it. The wine is made out of banaro fruit and can only be grown by us Forest Spring Spirits" Fennel said as he sat near Simon and enjoyed the wine.

"The banaro fruit needs special care and conditions to grow. When they mature, the fruit that they bear contains a special effect that calms one's mind and can even restore the expended mana in a short period of time. We call it the banaro wine. We use to grow this along with many other things back in our village. Drink up sir benefactor we have lots of it brewed out" like a drunkard, a reddish glow appeared on the old face of Fennel.

"Just Simon is fine" After saying that, Simon drank up all of the wine in his glass. He could feel his mind relaxing and the mystical energy in his body rapidly circulating through every vein and artery.

When he felt the changes taking place within his body, Simon couldn't help but marvel at the mysterious abilities of the Forest Spring Spirits to have grown a fruit with such a wondrous ability.

He felt like if he used Amalgamation magic right now, it would be much faster than any other time. The effects could be said as shocking no less. Not to mention that it was just from one fruit, he could only wonder what other abilities the clan which can harness the power of nature had.

If he could convince these people to come back with him to his dungeon, he would gain an immense help.

Suddenly Simon remembered something and asked Fennel who was seated behind.

“I wonder what your relationship with the Ancient Treants are for them to protect your clan to this extent?”.

He had already seen how protective the ruler of the Ancient Treants was towards the Forest Spring Spirit clan. However, what he didn't understand was why would the treant who were a different race, protect them.

Fennel had a look of pondering as he stared at his glass of wine before replying.

“Sir Simon what I know are bits and pieces of what happened back during the ancient times. Thus what I know is limited. I can only tell you that the ancestor of our clan and the Ancient Treants were friends even back then”.

“When we needed their help, they answered our calls. Perhaps it would be better if you asked this question to the ruler of the Ancient Treants, the Ancient Titan Treant. After all, he is one of being who had lived through the ancient times”.

Simon was shocked when he heard Fennel's reply. He had guessed that the ruler of the Ancient Treants had lived for a long, but he didn't imagine that the Ancient Titan Treant was someone from the ancient times.

If he had lived through the ancient times, it was not surprising that he commanded such respect from his followers.

“Just like you sir Simon, he is the benefactor of our clan although he always tries to deny it” Fennel said as he refilled his glass with wine.

“After our race fled from those adventurers to the Ancient Treants territory, he was the person who took all of us in and sheltered us here deep within his territory. Those humans who tried to follow us in were all killed by the ancient treants. However, by the time we reached this place, it was already too late as most of us died on the way”.

Fennel's eyes had a deep look of sorrow as he recounted what happened after they ran from the village.

"It's unfair that an old man like me gets to live while all those young ones sacrificed themselves and met their end to delay the adventurers... truly it's a pity" He lamented and gulped down his wine.

Simon who was listening from the side, shook his head in denial "Although it is true that we are the ones who decide our value, it's not good to devalue oneself too much. After all, if all the elders from the clan die, who will be the ones left to educate and pass on the knowledge to the young ones? wouldn't they be left to fend for themselves? Would you be able to rest in peace knowing that there is no one to guide those children?"

Fennel had a look as if he was completely sobered "Sir Simon... what do you mean?"

Simon pondered how to phrase his answer before replying "I had some goals before coming here. One of them was to see if there was still some elders who had survived. Someone who can impart the knowledge of the Forest Spring Spirits to those children. As for my other goals... I guess I would have to wait until I meet with the Ancient Titan Treant".

He looked out of the window and saw the titanic tree that appeared like a pillar connecting the heaven and earth.

Pausing for a second, Simon asked, "What kind of a person is the ruler of the Ancient Treants?". It seems like it was necessary for him to meet with the Ancient Titan Treant before he could convince these people to come with him to his dungeon.

It just so happens that the ruler of the Ancient Treant wanted to meet with Cecilia. He could use this opportunity to meet with the Ancient Titan Treant.