

D. of Pride 171

Chapter 171: Training Begins

Hearing her explanation, Simon immediately understood why she chose that place as his training ground. Even he vaguely felt that the place was far better to train in.

Irene's figure flashed and with an azure light, she quickly appeared near the pond. Simon followed next and arrived at the pond shortly. While rushing here, he had once again noticed the disparity in their skills.

Irene had used a special skill or technique unknown to him and arrived near the pond at a pace that was hard for him to follow even with his evolved [Flight] skill. The [High-Speed Flight] that he acquired after his previous skill evolved was a Superior tier Normal skill.

After arriving near the vicinity of the pond, Simon was surprised to find that he and Irene weren't the first comer. The Bloodthorn Demonic Warhorse who was roaming around the main floor, was the first one to arrive at this place.

Looking at it snuggling around the Trees of Mana and quietly dozing off, Simon felt that the warhorse too liked the place because of the abundant mana. Mana was beneficial to all the creatures and it came as no surprise to him that the Bloodthorn Demonic Warhorse would choose to stay in this place and utilize its effects.

The next thing that caught his eyes was the growth of the Trees of Mana. They were now so big and robust that Simon thought that given a month or two, they would quickly touch the ceiling of the floor which was three hundred meters above the ground.

'It seems that I have to do some remodelling of the main floor in my free time' Simon thought as he made a mental note. The air around the area was refreshing to breathe, it was as if the place was extremely rich in oxygen. And not only that, after Simon tried to circulate his mana around his body, he was amazed by how smoothly it was flowing and mysteriously enough the mana around here had a soothing effect.

The ever-present mana that he felt everywhere around the forest did not have such properties and the soothing effect he felt should be exclusive to the pond of serenity.

‘What is happening? Have the properties of mana been altered?... Is that even possible?’ Simon felt the mana around the surroundings and distinctively felt that it was quite different. The only possibility that came into his mind that could trigger such a peculiar change was none other than the pond of serenity.

The more he observed the pond, the more mysterious it became. ‘It seems Irene was right’ Simon thought when he realised the profundity of the pond. Training around here would be many times faster than any other area of the dungeon.

Now that he was here, he wanted to quickly start the training but did not know where to start. Irene who was beside him, could see the impatience in his eyes and said “Before we start the training, I want you to dive inside the pond. Try to endure it for a minute or so”.

Listening to Irene, Simon diverted his attention back to the pond of serenity which was releasing thick clouds of fog.

Previously when he dived inside the pond, he couldn’t even immerse in it for more than a minute. The pond wasn’t especially deep and one could see the bottom which had many different things growing in it from the shore. Although the fog obstructed the vision a little, it wasn’t enough to hide the contents of the ponds.

“I must remind you that the pond has been continuously changing. The density of the mystical energy deposited inside the pond by the veins beneath the earth has reached a dangerous degree. Even if it’s the current you, it might be impossible to even soak in it for more than twenty seconds”

Irene said as she carefully inspected the changes happening around the pond. Even without her telling him, Simon could see that the pond was not the same as before. A deep white light flashed inside from time to time.

He understood the reason behind Irene asking him to try and immerse in the pond for a minute or so. She wanted to see where his limit was and could plan the training according to it.

Simon without further ado started undressing but soon realised that Irene was also there. Her face remained impassive and it looked like she was not bothered by his actions.

‘Haha, what am I being flustered about... it’s not like I’m completely naked’ after stripping down to his shorts, Simon immediately dived inside the pond.

SHHHHHHH... the instant he jumped inside, his pale white skin turned a shade of red. He felt like he had lunged inside boiling hot water and the heat was searing his skin. However, the temperature inside the pond was normal and it was only his imagination.

Simon could feel the extremely rich energy sweep around him and entering his body through all the pores. The energy that had entered inside his body was so dense that it felt just like magma and was extremely hard to circulate.

The temperature of his body went up like mad whenever he circulated the energy and it was quickly becoming hard for him to even stay still. Unlike the physical pressure that his body had to endure during the trial set by Aldebaran, the pressure now was completely internal and depended on how efficiently he circulated them.

Right after ten seconds passed, he felt all of the veins inside his body bulging from the abundant energy which was quickly going berserk. An unbelievable amount of pain that was so acute that they assaulted every inch of his body.

Simon felt like his body was extremely heavy and stiff, just like a stone that had no buoyancy. Each second felt extremely long and he could no longer keep his eyes open. The tremendous energy inside the pond felt just like lightning infused water, continuously electrocuting him.

Alarms were continuously flaring in his head and the amount of energy stored inside his body was reaching a point of bursting out. This was completely different from the trial. If he stubbornly held on any longer, his body would burst from the overflowing energy.

Realising that this was the current limit of his body, he quickly surfaced out of the pond.

“Huff... huff... huff...” His breathing was ragged while steam continuously rose out of his body. The overflowing energy inside him slowly receded a little at a time and Simon finally sighed in relief.

He felt pain all over his body and an extreme amount of exhaustion hit him. Opening his status, Simon was shocked to find that his HP had been shaved by one third and his MP had been completely drained.

“How can that be? I did not suffer any injuries for my HP to go down by this much and even my MP... just until now, I felt that my body was filled with mystical energy and would burst out any moment” Simon muttered out loud as he stared at the pond with his trembling eyes.

“Twenty-five seconds. That is the current limit of your body” Irene silently appeared behind and appraised him.

“You don’t have to be so shocked. With your current rank, your HP was bound to go down every second as for your MP, you were continuously depleting them while trying to circulate the new energy that was wildly rushing inside your body. It is only natural that you won’t have any after all the efforts you have expended while immersing inside the pond”.

Irene quickly dispelled the doubts he had in his mind.

It seemed that he made the correct choice by realising the current limits of his body and surfacing at the right time. Any later than that and he wouldn’t have MP to circulate the overflowing energy continuously rushing inside his body and his remaining HP would have been immediately shaved off.

The moment such thoughts arrived in his mind, he felt a shudder through his soul. While soaking the energy inside the pond, Simon felt like his body was a small vessel that could break any moment if filled to the brim.

Twenty-five seconds was far too less, he had to increase the capacity of the vessel that is his body to endure immersing in it for longer periods of time. Although Simon was a little disappointed that he couldn’t even endure for even half a minute, he quickly got over it.

Wasn’t he training to get stronger? Once he is stronger, Simon was confident that he could break his current record.

Even if the pond was continuously changing, he had faith that he could overcome it. While he was lost in his thoughts, Irene who was similarly deliberating something, asked “Do you feel some changes in your body after immersing yourself in the pond?”.

Her question woke him up from his train of thoughts and he quickly analysed his body. Simon was silent for a long while and just when he thought that there were no changes in his body, he was amazed to find that the mana circulation was a little faster than before.

The change was so slight that if he didn't pay any attention to it, he would have missed it completely.

Nodding his head, Simon replied, "I think the rate at which I can circulate the mana inside my body is a little faster than before. That is all about it I guess".

He did not know why Irene asked such a question nor what kind of answer she was looking for. But if had to describe the changes that had occurred to his body after that experience, then it would only be that.

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Did he miss something? As Simon was deliberating his answer once again, Irene seemed content with his response.

She glanced at Simon's askance face and said "Right! Even if the change is minute, you must also look at the total time you had immersed inside the pond. All that change had taken place after only soaking yourself inside for less than half a minute".

Simon widened his eyes at that reply. Why didn't he think of that? The answer was right in front of him, in plain sight. He was too engrossed by his depleted HP and MP that he failed to realise the wondrous changes that had occurred inside his body.

What was more incredible was that he had soaked in that energy for only twenty or so seconds. What would happen if he was able to immerse inside the pond for longer periods of time?

Simon couldn't even imagine what kind of changes his body would go through at that time.

Although his body was still trembling from the experience, his heart was pounding like crazy with excitement. Seeing his reaction, Irene wasn't surprised and smiled to herself.

The pond changing to this degree was because of the many Mystical veins underneath the earth connecting with the pond. Being deposited with such rich energy, the pond was bound to undergo unforeseen changes.

All of it was thanks to Cecilia who had unknowingly manipulated the trajectory of the mana veins. Even now when Irene used her peculiar ability to gaze underneath the ground, she could see massive mana veins interconnecting with one another to form a huge network.

The degree to which they were being altered, was truly a surprising sight. The true abilities of a Forest Spring Royal Spirit was laid bare in front of them.

“I feel like I understand now why you said the pond would be a great asset to raise my strength in the future” Simon said as he marvelled at the pond.

A smile blossomed onto Irene’s face when she heard that; she replied “You should thank Cecilia. That little girl is constantly thinking about how to be of some help to you”.

When he thought about the little girl he had taken in as his little sister who was constantly worried about him, Simon couldn’t help rub his nose as he said “Yeah, I’ll do so”.

Irene did not comment any further when she saw how serious he was. But when she thought about Cecilia who was steadily awakening her powers, she couldn’t help but remark “Her abilities are slowly manifesting and it wouldn’t be long before she can completely awaken to her Forest Spring Royal Spirit powers. At that time, the Pond of Serenity wouldn’t be the only thing that would undergo massive changes in your dungeon”.

Irene was well aware of how unusual an ability a Forest Spring Royal Spirit possessed. There were not many races that can manipulate the forces of nature to such a degree and even amongst them the Forest Spring Royal Spirit reigned supreme. What she had shown right now, was just the tip of an iceberg.

“Yeah...” When Simon heard that Cecilia was starting to manifest her powers, he was starting to worry a little.

Hearing his listless reply, Irene asked in a frown “What’s wrong? Your reply was awfully unenergetic”.

The words that Aldebaran said about Cecilia being a reincarnation of one of the Eight Emissaries of the primordial demon of pride, was still weighing on his mind. He was worried not because of her being a reincarnation of some Emissary but because of a possibility that she might become someone completely different.

Although they were not blood-related, Simon was starting to see her as his own sister. There was no way he would be happy knowing that she was steadily awakening her powers as that was akin to awakening her memories as well.

These complicated feelings of his had no outlet to go and seeing that Irene was still unaware of Cecilia's identity, Simon decided to spill all of it.

As Irene heard what Simon had learned from the Ancient titan Treant, she couldn't help but widen her eyes in shock. The more she heard, the bigger the turmoil in her heart was. It was the first time that Simon saw Irene being surprised this much by something and couldn't help but feel that she knew something.

When he asked her about it, she did not reply. No, it would be more appropriate to say that she was so absorbed in her thoughts that she failed to react to his question.

"What is happening? I have never seen her behave like this before?" Simon muttered as he observed Irene's reaction.

Although the noble and cold bearing that was inborn to her was still there, there was no hint of her gaining her composure back. Her eyes would be sometimes in a daze and sometimes focused, her crescent brows were locked in a frown and it looked like she was trying very hard to recollect something.

Her expression was constantly changing, sometimes it was in pain, other times it was happy, angry and sad. The expressions that Simon thought that he would never get to see from Irene constantly appeared on her at this moment.

It was also at this moment that Simon realised that Irene's temperament was not cold and aloof from the start. No matter how icy and noble one behaved, they would still have a time when they were as innocent as a child.

It seemed that Irene was going through a great emotional upheaval and all her emotions that had been encased in ice, was slowly surfacing.

“Kuh... ahn~” just when the emotional upheaval was starting to overwhelm her and she released a sound of agony, a resonant phoenix voice echoed out across the whole dungeon.

Simon who was starting to become a little anxious seeing that she was still not snapping out from her daze, was astounded to see the halo of an Azure phoenix appear behind her. The phoenix looked illusory and gave off a boundless aura that seemed to be able to encompass the whole world.

In front of the phoenix, the world looked tiny and its divine might made one to bow their heads in reverence.

Simon had never seen such a beautiful bird as marvellous and celestial as the one before him. That was not all, a mark that looked like the phoenix appeared on her forehead and glowed with a soothing azure light. The mark looked beautiful with all those intrinsic patterns and seemed just like a crown decorating her forehead.

The pain that was assaulting Irene, was instantly calmed with that phoenix cry. At this moment, from her countenance to her very being looked extremely divine.

The illusory scene disappeared after a few seconds and Irene’s tightly locked brows finally loosened. The next moment when she opened her eyes, it looked extremely confused and lost.

Simon wanted to ask what happened to her earlier but kept his mouth shut when he saw how wavering and unsure her eyes seemed at this moment.

Even if he asked her about it, Simon was sure that he wouldn’t get any answer. It was also at this moment that he realised that he didn’t know anything about Irene. Her origins and her past was a complete mystery to him.

‘Does she herself not know what just happened a few seconds ago’ Simon felt like Irene herself was unsure about what happened to her earlier when looking at her lost expression.

The mood quickly became uncomfortable and Simon did not want to probe her about it anymore. Therefore he hurriedly changed the topic to their training.

“So what do I do next to train my skills,” Simon asked trying to dissolve the weird atmosphere. There was no point worrying about something that he clearly knew nothing about. Instead, it was better for him to focus on getting stronger and raising his strength.

It seemed that his efforts were successful as Irene hurriedly recollected her composure. Earlier he dived inside the pond as he was asked and realised the current limit of his body. He was also made aware of how important the pond was for his growth.

Irene clearly had some plans for making him do something like that. But even he didn't imagine the next words that came out of her. She looked at him and quickly shifted her gaze away before saying in an indifferent tone.

“How long do you plan to stay like that?”.

“Huh?” At first, Simon was confused but he quickly realised the meaning behind her words. Right now, he was still only in his shorts and was wearing nothing. Previously before he dived inside the pond, he removed all of his clothes except for his shorts and ever since surfacing from the pond, the event that happened one after the other totally made him forget about his current appearance.

It seemed that no matter how unbothered she acted, Irene was still conscious of his appearance.

Simon quickly swallowed his embarrassment and hurriedly wore his clothes. When she saw that Simon was done changing, Irene observed him with that mysterious glow in her eyes and nodded before saying:

“When you were immersing inside the rich energy within the pond of Serenity, how well were you able to circulate the energy that was wildly rushing inside your body?”.

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Simon thought over the question for a while and remembered the sensation of the mystical energy that was rushing rampantly inside his body. At that time, he had to expend all of his mana to circulate the energy within him.

“It was extremely difficult. The energy felt as hot as magma when it gushed inside my body and circulating it was exceedingly challenging. There was even a moment when it felt immovable no matter how much mana I poured to circulate it. It was as if it had clogged somewhere”.

Simon described the exact feeling he had back when he was soaking inside the pond. To his surprise, Irene looked completely unfazed and acted as if it was according to her estimation.

“That is because you are yet to establish a mana line” Irene pointed out before adding “Alright, your training will be focused to acquire a mana line as soon as possible”.

Simon asked in curiosity before Irene could continue any further “This [Mana Line] that you are talking about what kind of skill is it?”.

He did not know why but this skill sounded oddly familiar to her. Thinking for a while Simon suddenly remembered that he had seen a skill that resembled the [Mana Skill] in Irene’s status before.

“Did you ever observe the flow of mana inside your body while casting a magic of any tier?” Irene answered his question with a question of her own. Simon mused over it before simply shaking his head. Most of the time when he cast magic, he was too focused on materialising and controlling the power of the magic to pay attention to anything else.

Hence up until now he never had any chance to observe the flow of mana inside his body. Irene extended her jade white hand, the instant she spread them an azure blue lotus made completely out of ice bloomed in her hand.

“Mana Lines determines how fast and effectively you cast a magic. For example this ice lotus. It didn’t even take me a second to cast it but if I were to cast the magic without using the Mana Lines, it would take me a few more seconds to cast it. Not only that, the output and power that can be brought forth is far greater than usual”.

Simon widened his eyes in surprise. What did it mean to have a skill such as [Mana lines]? Didn’t it mean that he would be able to cast magic many times faster especially when it comes to using wide-area intermediate tier magic and above which needs an enormous amount of time to cast?

The same goes for amalgamation magic which takes the same amount of time that you need to cast an advanced magic. In a life and death situation where even a fraction of a second counts, being able to cast magic even a millisecond ahead is a great advantage.

That was how much of a difference acquiring the skill [Mana Lines] would make.

Seeing Simon caught up in his thoughts, Irene explained “Normally you would acquire this skill when you rank up to a Demon Earl. What we are trying to acquire is not just an ordinary [Mana Lines] but the superior tier of it [Innate Mana Lines]”.

Simon nodded his head in excitement, he couldn't wait to see the effects of the skill.

“But it won't be so easy to acquire this skill. [Mana Lines] is a Rare skill that makes it hard to acquire and even more so to evolve its tier. You who are trying to go up three ranks in a row in just seven years, this skill is absolutely necessary as it would bolster your prowess and help you reach your objectives”.

“All the strong people of this world have this skill at the legendary tier. Your goal should be to acquire the skill before you increase your rank to Demon Earl and evolve it to a superior tier when you reach the next rank and so on so forth.”.

Hearing the intricate details that Irene had laid out for his training, Simon was overwhelmed. He was amazed to find that Irene had thought so far ahead when she said that she would help him train.

The plan that she laid out to train him, was elaborate and Simon could feel that Irene had put quite some thought into it. At first, he agreed on the training only because he thought that he could learn something from her top-notch skills.

But it seemed that it was naïve of him to think like that. Irene had already prepared herself to train him and even laid out the carefully thought out plan for his sake. He did not know what her motive was behind training him but seeing the determination in her eyes, it couldn't help but light a fire inside him.

Now that he knew which skill to acquire, Simon couldn't help but wonder how to acquire it. According to Irene, one can normally acquire the [Mana Lines] skill when they rank up to a Demon earl. But it doesn't mean that one cannot acquire it before that.

‘A skill that can normally only be acquired after level 500... what kind of a skill is it’ Simon wondered as he thought about acquiring the skill.

A Demon Earl was a rank that could only be reached by those demons who have a fairly pure bloodline. When a Demon Viscount reaches the peak of his level that is Level 500, he has a chance to rank up to Demon Earl given that he has sufficient skills and bloodline.

Those who are born with impure bloodline, are forever stuck in the level 500 barrier never to take any more steps forward. Although there was only a level difference between level 500 and level 501 but the gap was insurmountable for many.

One could imagine what kind of skill the [Mana Lines] was for it to be available only to those above level 500. Simon was currently on the verge of breaking through the level 300 barrier and step on level 301. His pace of levelling decreased quite a bit compared to before and it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it had completely stopped after he reached level 300.

Each hundred level barrier represents a huge milestone that one needs to achieve before levelling further. The milestone that one needs to achieve can be mastery in skills, magic or techniques. In his case, it seemed to be his skills as Simon could already feel that he was one step away from breaking through level 301 after evolving the tiers of some of his skills during the trial set by Aldebaran.

The higher the level, the tougher the milestones are. Simon was a little excited to acquire a skill that was normally only possible when he breaks through level 500.

Irene carefully observed Simon's reaction and nodded her head when she saw his enthusiasm. The skill was definitely not going to be easy to acquire therefore she needed him to maintain this level of enthusiasm.

"That being said, [Mana Lines] is not the only skill we are going to focus on. You need to increase the tiers of your normal skills too. Though they are normal skills, but when evolved to the highest tier they can enhance your strength by a few fold. Increasing the tiers of your normal skills is by no means a waste"

Irene said to bring Simon out of his delusion. He was so concerned about acquiring [Mana Lines] that he almost lost track of reality.

Taking a deep breath, Simon snapped himself out of it. There was no point in being so focused on acquiring a skill that he neglects all the other skills. No matter if it was a Normal, Rare or a Lost skill, he needed to increase them to their highest tier to increase his strength.

Simon knew that it was easier said than done but if he couldn't even achieve this much, then there was no way he would be able to keep the seven years agreement with Aldebaran.

Seeing that his face had finally become serious Irene added “Your magic and Normal skills is what your current strength is based on. For your training in the future, we would focus more on evolving your Normal skills to their highest tier and gaining new ones in your consecutive ranks”.

Simon nodded his head as he looked at Irene. It might be him but Simon thought that Irene had a knack for teaching.

“Alright, for these coming weeks focus on acquiring the [Mana Lines] skill” Irene knitted her crescent brows as she deliberated over his training regimen.

“About that... how do I go on about acquiring the skill?” Simon asked. Although he now knew which skill he must acquire to move forward, he was totally clueless on how to acquire it.

Irene was not surprised by his question and calmly answered it for him. “Acquiring the [Mana Lines] skill when you are not even a Demon Earl yet would be extremely difficult. Even if that [Main menu] skill of yours allow you to surpass the restriction placed on you, the fact that your bloodline is still impure would make it quite challenging for you to acquire it”.

After saying her piece, she carefully observed Simon whose determination had not faltered even after listening to the limitation placed on him.

A rarely seen smile bloomed on her face as she pointed “Although it is extremely difficult, it is not impossible especially when you have the perfect skill to practice on with”.

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Simon who was carefully listening to her, couldn’t help but yell out in surprise “Huh?”. Her last words made him tilt his head in confusion. ‘What did she mean by those words?’.

As if perfectly reading his thoughts Irene replied “What I mean is that you have something in your possession that can help you acquire the [Mana Lines] faster. The skill I’m talking about is the one and only Phantasmal tier skill of yours”.

Simon stared with wide eyes at Irene’s reply. It was the first time he heard something like that. A Skill helping in acquiring another skill what kind of ridiculous concept was that? Although it was hard to believe, coming out of Irene it sounded all the more believable. The only Phantasmal tier skill that he had in his arsenal was the [Ancestral Symbol Ignition] Skill.

Irene observed his reaction before adding “Right the [Ancestral Symbol Ignition] skill of yours will make it easier for you to acquire the [Mana Lines] faster. The skill is all about establishing a set of networks for your mana to flow in after all. Although it is a Rare skill and might be difficult to acquire, once one gets the feeling and sensation of the mana within them flowing in a set path, it becomes easier for them to acquire it”.

The feeling and sensation of mana flowing in a set path... Simon repeated as he tried to feel the flow of mana inside his body.

The mana inside him was wild and rampant never flowing in a fixed direction. With just the slightest probe, a violent storm would erupt in his mana pool. How was he supposed to establish a set path for the mana to flow in?

Simon had no idea but from Irene, he knew that the skill [Ancestral symbol Ignition] was the key. However, what he couldn't understand was how was this skill related to Mana Lines. Simon looked at Irene who was keeping silent for some reason.

Since she had not spoken any further, it could only mean that she wanted Simon to find it himself. [Ancestral Symbol Ignition] was one of the skills that temporarily gives a huge power spike for a short period of time by fusing all the skills of the user.

Naturally, the more skills the user had, the more powerful the effect but at the same time, it places a heavy burden onto the body and leaves the user unable to use any skill for a short period of time.

The duration had increased and the cooldown of the skill after which he can use it again, had also gone down after his rank and level had increased. As of now, the skill had become an indispensable ace of his that had saved him from many pinch situations.

After his last use of the skill back during the trial, two weeks had already passed and it was available to him once again. It seemed that after his last rank up, the cooldown of the skill had gone down significantly.

Now the very same skill was going to help him acquire another skill that would bolster his power even further.

‘A skill that drastically increases my power and skill that establishes a set of path for the mana to flow in...’ Simon closed his eyes and thought about those times when he activated the skill. There was clearly a catch for the drastic increase in power whenever he activated the skill.

‘What could it be...’ Simon thought long and hard before a thought suddenly dawned onto him. What if activating the [Ancestral Symbol Ignition] skill forcefully established a set path for his mana to flow in?

What if the insane speed at which he could conjure up magic during those times was because of the Mana Lines?

What if he could recall the flow and sensation of his mana while the skill [Ancestral symbol Ignition] is activated?

Wouldn’t it mean that he can acquire a Rare Skill like Mana Lines early? Wouldn’t it explain the heavy pain that his body experiences each time he activated the skill?

Since he didn’t have [mana lines] yet, every time he activated the [Ancestral Symbol Ignition] skill, a set of paths for the mana to flow in, is forcefully established. That way, the berserk mana within him flows smoothly and his strength is magnified manifold.

Simon tried to recall the sensation he felt when he activated the [Ancestral Symbol Ignition] previously. At that time, he was too injured but he could still distinctly feel the volume, speed and flow of mana inside his body was many times faster than usual. The difference was as big as heaven and earth.

Seeing that Simon had realised the enormous help that his [Ancestral Symbol Ignition] skill provided for his training, Irene nodded in satisfaction.

After she heard the details of the skill from Simon, she was already aware of how powerful a skill like that which could grow with its user was. Not to mention it perfectly aligned with the next skill she wanted Simon to learn.

It was already extremely unusual for a low-rank demon to have such a high tier skill not to mention the skill was an augmenting one.

‘If he can perfectly master the way the mana flows during the activation of the Phantasmal tier skill and recreate it, his powers will not just multiply but will increase manifold’ Irene thought as she saw how hard Simon was trying to recall the sensation.

Even when he was thinking very hard, his face looked straightforward and determined.

BOOM... It was at this moment when she suddenly felt a drastic rise in Simon's strength. The aura and mana coming off of him were on a completely different scale.

Irene immediately understood that Simon had activated that skill of his and was trying to memorise the complex network of mana lines established.

Like a gale, the pressure emitted by Simon enveloped the area near the pond causing the dozing Bloodthorn Demonic warhorse to jolt awake. It was awakened by the disturbance it felt around the surroundings and the mana which became turbulent all of a sudden.

Looking around, it quickly identified the source of the disturbance. Concerned, it quickly approached Simon but was stopped by Irene who was beside him.

Looking at the warhorse, Irene said "Don't worry he is fine. Right now he is trying his best to get stronger, it is better that we do not disturb him".

The warhorse observed Simon with its three crimson pair of eyes and nodded. Its intelligence was already on par with humans and it understood that its master was currently in a state where he shouldn't be disturbed.

"From what I can tell, your bloodline seems to be a little special. Although it's slight, you seem to have a trace of that ■■■■■ race. But your abilities and appearance is completely different than theirs... it makes me curious as to where he summoned you from".

Irene muttered when she saw how concerned the demonic warhorse was for its master. To have summoned a being that even she was unaware of, Irene once again reassessed the [Main Menu] skill of Simon.

The Bloodthron Demonic Warhorse was summoned through the [Gacha] and was the first-ever [B] rank subordinate that Simon had. Although its power was dwarfed by Irene, it was still a [B] rank that most of the powerful people in this world wouldn't dare to underestimate.

The eyes of the demonic warhorse glimmered after listening to Irene as it silently observed its master. After being with Simon for so long and levelling up, it became conscious of its existence.

Little by little, it was starting to become aware of the incredible power hidden within his bloodline. Although it was just a trace, it was powerful enough to break the restraints and surpass the limits of a [B] rank.

After being aware of its surrounding spending time with its master, its intelligence progressed at an unbelievable speed. Seeing strong beings like Irene gather near its master, it was no longer satisfied with the current limits of its power.

Right now, it was level 288, a level that the average inhabitants of this world wouldn't scoff at. But the warhorse wasn't content with that. It wanted to get stronger faster and become the most helpful subordinate of its master.

When it discovered the pond of serenity within the main floor and approached near its vicinity, it felt the bloodline in his body wildly thumping. Its intelligence told it that staying near the pond and basking in the presence of the overflowing mana from the pond, would be extremely beneficial for it.

If it can get more and more stronger, it can become useful to its master.

Irene who was similarly observing Simon from the sidelines, felt the determination of the warhorse and was quite amazed. It wasn't just the master but even his warhorse has the zeal to improve.

Irene sighed giving it some thought and replied flatly "Although it might be harsh to hear, but your limit was already set when you were assessed with a [B] rank. After your level reaches level 700, it won't increase further. Your master, Simon is a special case but usually one is eternally unable to break through the restraints placed on them by their bloodline. More so when the level barrier is that high".

The Warhorse neighed in understanding but the glimmer in its eyes didn't darken a bit. On the contrary, it served to fuel its determination even further.

"Sigh... you are just like your master stubborn and persistent. But I don't think it is bad. These are exactly the qualities one needed to get stronger" Irene said in a serious tone

Chapter 175: Named Monsters (3)

“Sigh... you are just like your master stubborn and persistent. But I don’t think it is bad. These are exactly the qualities one needed to get stronger” Irene said in a serious tone

“Although the status had ranked you as a [B] rank, it was based on your current bloodline and predicted growth. The status of this world maybe be great but it is not omnipotent, it has its own flaws and loopholes”.

“Your current status as a [B] rank didn’t take into consideration the slight trace of the special bloodline that is lying dormant within you. You might have already felt it but if you can awaken that power, you can break through the obstacles limiting your growth. That being said, it is impossible for you right now to awaken that kind of power. If you keep focusing on it, you might limit your present growth. You can think about surpassing your limits when you near it. For now, I think it is good for you to do what you have been doing up until now”.

Irene explicated and walked near the pond, her crystal blue eyes resting on the reflection. The glint of determination in the Bloodthorn demonic warhorse eyes became even more piercing. It looked at its master one last time and went back to its original spot before lying down there once again.

The density of mana around the surrounding was very thick and beneficial for increasing its strength. Hence it would be a waste not to take advantage of it. The thick fog lingering around the area started enveloping the warhorse within it and after a few minutes, its figure was completely covered by the white fog.

Irene who was seated near the pond, lightly brushed the surface of the water with her hands causing a slight ripple. She looked at her reflection and slightly knitted her crescent brows.

The scene that happened just a while ago where she suddenly had this incredible headache for some reason, appeared in her mind once again. She did not why this phenomenon occurred when she suddenly heard about Cecilia being a reincarnation of some Emmicary.

Irene clenched her hands and did her best to recollect something. At that time, she distinctly saw something, it was like scenes from somewhere, intermittent and unclear.

She saw a figure of a person bathed in blood facing two shadowy figures who similarly had wounds covering all their body. She did not know why but she suddenly felt a familiar presence from the two shadowy figures and before she knew it, everything became a blurry mess.

It felt nostalgic yet unfamiliar at times. But how can that be? She clearly has no such memories like that.

What is happening? The very thought made her headache worsen and she instinctively froze the whole pond. The mark of the phoenix appeared on her delicate forehead once again and eased her pain, a clear resonant sound echoed out across the main floor.

The pond that had a ridiculous intensity of mystical energy, was frozen before one could even blink an eye. The pond that even the body of a Demon Viscount couldn't handle for more than half a minute, was frozen by Irene just like that.

One could imagine the kind of realm one needs to reach to do a feat like that subconsciously. SHHHHH... Frosty air surrounded the area causing a sharp decline in temperature.

Although the pond was frozen, it was just the upper half, the bottom half where the mystical veins were connected was completely unaffected. This means that all the objects growing at the bottom of the pond, was completely unscratched.

Realising her mistake, Irene swiftly removed her hands from the surface of the frozen pond and used her Permafrost magic to turn the water back.

Looking at the two who were doing their best to increase their strength, Irene discarded all those thoughts that floated onto her mind and paid more attention to their growth. Glancing at Simon who had unknowingly entered a focus state, she mused.

There was another way to increase the rank of the Bloodthorn Demonic Warhorse that she didn't tell it as this method meant relying on others. Perhaps she felt it wasn't required or perhaps she believed that they would find this method soon but she felt that it wasn't the right time to tell them this method yet.

The other way to increase the rank of the demonic warhorse was by naming it. Irene did not know where and how Simon managed to summon someone like it but one thing she was sure of was that even without being named, the Bloodthorn Demonic warhorse was already ranked at [B].

There was no telling what its rank would be after it receives a name. On top of possessing a special bloodline, the Bloodthorn demonic warhorse was also unnamed.

It was already unusual for a being [B] rank or above to be unnamed since all the monsters when born, receive a name from the abundant mystical energy of the world.

Almost all of the high ranking monsters when born receive a name from the mystical energy. The Bloodthorn Demonic warhorse being without a name, was clearly unusual. Although there are some cases where a high-rank monster is born without a name, those are clearly the exception and only happened to those classified as [A] rank or above.

What does a high ranking monster being born without receiving a name signifies? It goes to show that the everpresent mystical energy of the world, already thinks that the being is plentiful strong enough even without a name.

If the Bloodthorn demonic warhorse fell in the same category then there was no telling what its rank would be after it was named. Although not receiving a name was unusual, but Irene wasn't surprised.

'It seems that the mystical energy was able to sense the faint trace of bloodline sleeping deep within the warhorse' Irene could tell why the mystical energy decided onto not gifting a name to the warhorse.

'The faint trace of the special bloodline that it had inherited should be from that clan' Irene crossed her arms as she deliberated. She was familiar with the beings from that clan and knew how powerful they were. There was no doubt in her mind that if its bloodline is awakened, it would be no exaggeration to say that the warhorse's strength and bloodline would jump a few ranks.

That's what made it scary about inheriting a bloodline of one of the clans that sat at the pinnacle of power. Although awakening the bloodline sleeping within the warhorse would make it a powerhouse that stood at the pinnacle, it was easier said than done.

Even if the Bloodthorn demonic warhorse tried its best, it might not even be able to come in contact with the faint trace of bloodline within it much less awaken it.

That being said, the Bloodthorn demonic warhorse not receiving a name might work out in its favour in the end. Other than receiving a name from the mystical energy, monsters can also receive a name from someone.

However, that someone must be a rank higher than the one who is being bestowed a name or else the naming process won't work or in the worst case the person bestowing the name might even die.

Naming is a process where a person grants a name to the other using the mana within them. The name bestowed is not just any ordinary name as it is the amalgamation of mana within the person transferred to the entity in the form of a name.

A monster named like this will forever be branded with a marking of the bestower and would be eternally loyal to him. The entity being named in return will receive a huge power in the form of a name, making them multiple times stronger than before.

Sometimes when the bestower is too powerful, the entity that receives the name receives a percentage of power from the bestower and ends up jumping one or two ranks. Although Naming is an unmistakably powerful tool, it is still considered a forbidden process as it needs a lot of control and incredible manipulation of mana.

One mistake and the bestower might even lose their very life in the process. There are various other restrictions on the process such as if the entity is already named, the naming process won't work and will fail automatically. Or if the bestower is not a rank above the receiver, or if they are in the same rank, the Naming won't work.

Similarly, if the receiver is too weak or low ranked to bear the name, it would die immediately by blowing up from within. There are other considerations to be taken such as losing focus during the process and immature manipulation or control over mana would result in your entire mana being stolen in return.

The most important of all is that the named entity loses some of its freedom and is branded with the mark of the bestower, making them eternally loyal and unable to refuse any orders from them.

Although it might sound like a slave contract, there are some differences. Unlike the slave contract where the life and death of the slave are under the control of its master, the Naming process doesn't fully bar the freedom of the named entity.

Though some of the actions of the receiver are restricted, it retains most of its cognition and thinking ability. Since the entity receives a huge increase in strength in the form of a name, the brand is essential so as to prevent the receiver from hurting the person who named it.

Chapter 176: Serenity Stone

Since the entity receives a huge increase in strength in the form of a name, the brand is essential so as to prevent the receiver from hurting the person who named it.

After all, if the person who named it dies, the brand marking the entity also dissipates but not the name. To put it bluntly, the Naming process marks the entity with a brand of the bestower to control its actions that might be harmful to the bestower.

One needs immaculate control of the mana within them to name others. Also one cannot name an entity many times stronger than it. The reason behind Irene thinking of this method was because of the loyalty and bond displayed by the warhorse towards Simon.

She believed that the Bloodthorn Demonic Warhorse would be more than happy to receive a name from Simon. However, since the Naming process needs the bestower that is Simon to be higher ranked than the receiver which is the warhorse, it wasn't going to work until unless Simon increases his rank and level to the point where he was higher ranked than his summon.

Simon currently was only a Demon Viscount and there was no way he could name an entity on the level of the Bloodthorn Demonic warhorse. Not to mention he would need to perfect his control and manipulation over the mana within him.

He who hasn't even acquired the [Mana Lines] skill wouldn't even be able to invoke the Naming process in the first place. which required a complex manipulation of mana. For this reason, Irene didn't point out this method when she spoke to the Bloodthorn demonic warhorse.

She believed that it was still far too early for them to think of this process when the limit of the warhorse wasn't even close yet.

While she was caught up in her thoughts, the aura around Simon started welling more and more. Even he didn't know when but he had reached a transient state where all of the unnecessary thoughts dissipated from his mind increasing his focus and concentration.

A few minutes ago he was desperately trying to recall the sensation and the pattern in which the mana flows in his body when the skill [Ancestral Symbol Ignition] was activated.

Trying to feel the complex network of mana flowing within his body was easier said than done. No matter how he tried to recollect it, he failed at every step as the process was too complex for the current him to remember it in one go.

Seconds ticked away and Simon couldn't reach anywhere. He had come to an impasse where he couldn't make any progress. Simon knew that acquiring a skill wouldn't be this easy not to mention he was trying to get the hang of a Rare skill that was unlike any of the Normal skills that he got after levelling.

There was no way it would be that easy to acquire a rare skill or else it wouldn't be in the possession of the powerful ones. Although Simon was aware of it, the faint hope that his Phantasmal tier skill provided in acquiring the [Mana Lines] made him rush all the more.

Since he knew that once he could recollect the sensation and the path in which mana flows during the activation of the [Ancestral Symbol Ignition skill], he thought that he could recreate it and learn the Rare skill [Mana Lines] faster.

Maybe subconsciously his mind was leaning towards that kind of thinking that he wasn't making any progress now. PHEW... exhaling a deep breath, Simon calmed his mind and nerves that was trying to get the better of himself.

Unknowing to even him, Simon had willed his mind to reach the self transient state. Where every thought he had was clear, where time had stopped into a crawl.

Feeling the change in his mental state, Simon was surprised by this sudden transformation. This kind of state felt oddly familiar to him and it didn't take him long to find out that it was his second time experiencing such a transformation.

The first time was when he was facing the Elder Treants at the border of the Ancient treants Territory. At that time, their group of three was overwhelmed by the defence of the Elder treants who happen to be sitting upon a mystical vein.

Every attack at that time, would be easily negated or endured through their [Root] skill and defence. Even Irene's magic wasn't able to freeze them albeit he knew that she wasn't going all out. But the treants were able to thwart out her eyes and regenerate from the damage.

It was because they were stuck in such a situation that Simon took the gamble of trying out the amalgamation between his intermediate tier Flame magic and Novice tier Electro Magic.

At such a dire moment where every second count, he took the initiative to do so which ultimately did work out in his favour. At that time he had reached a self transient state where his focus and concentration was increased manifold.

Thanks to that, he was able to bring out an equilibrium among the two attributes of magic resulting in a new amalgamation magic. The state of mind he had reached now was no different than before.

This means that he was able to enter the self transient state once again. A state where all unnecessary thought disappears and one's focus and concentration increases manifold was perfectly the opportunity he needed this time.

How could he waste it? To recreate the Mana Lines used when the [Ancestral symbol Igniton] was activated, he needed to first carve the sensation within his body so that he would be able to recall it at any moment. And to do that, what better way than to use the skill first hand.

Although the skill would take a heavy toll on his body and would go into a cooldown once again, Simon didn't hesitate to activate it. More like the current state of mind he was in was the perfect situation he could ask for to be in while activating the skill.

Now that the concentration and the focus he could put into each detail had increased manifold, there was no way he would be unable to make any progress. What he was aiming for wasn't to immediately acquire the skill but to try to get the hang of the path the mana takes while the skill was activated.

That is to say, he was trying to feel the sensation of the mana lines that is forcefully established. Perhaps due to this change of mentality, when he activated the [Ancestral symbol Ignition] he was able to feel the mana flow within his body more vividly than before.

Every skill in his arsenal fused together to become the fuel to push his strength forward and a complex network like tributaries of a river crisscrossing around his body from which mana flowed in a set path, was formed.

Simon was astounded when he felt the ferocity and the volume in which mana circulated within the mana lines. The sheer complexity of the mana lines formed from the Phantasmal tier skill was on a completely different level.

The difficulty of even sensing the mana flowing in such an intricate pattern was already exceedingly challenging not to mention he had to recreate it from the scratch.

Simon knew that it would be very tough to acquire such a skill in the short run after all he has to rely on his imperfect sensation and feeling from before to establish the [Mana Lines]. Even when he was in a self-transient state of mind each and every detail of the mana lines was just too overwhelming to remember.

Since that was the case, Simon shifted his focus to try and feel the sensation of as many paths where the mana flowed in as possible. Since he wasn't pressed for time, there was no need for him to strain his senses on acquiring the skill immediately.

Instead, it would be much more beneficial if he could learn something from this experience. Stabilising his mind, he focused all of his attention on the paths the mana took whenever he made a small movement. He paid attention to the finest details and as to how fast and slow they moved in each of those paths.

Without even him realizing it, Simon was so absorbed that he completely forgot the flow of time and before long six hours had passed. His body was still seating near the pond with his eyes closed.

The outburst of power resulting from the activation of the [Ancestral Symbol Ignition] skill was long gone but Simon was still too riveted on recalling and remembering the sensation. PHEW... exhaling a deep breath, Simon opened his eyes to find himself in the exact same spot.

The mana condensed in the form of mist lingering around the area was as dense as ever. He did not know how long had passed since he entered a special state of mind, but he believed that it must have been quite a while.

While he was looking around trying to make sense of the drift of time, Irene's figure silently appeared near the pond. She observed him for a while and from his expression, she could tell that Simon must have realised something.

"It has been six hours since you entered the self- transient state. By now you must have realised how difficult it is to acquire the Rare skill [Mana Lines]. But it matters not, as long as you keep on making steady progress, it wouldn't be long before you acquire the skill" Irene said in a tranquil voice while observing the changes in him.

Chapter 177: Serenity Stone (2)

Indeed, Simon had quite the change after just spending six hours in a self-transient state. The most noticeable change was the look in his eyes which have set their sights on a goal and his presence that spoke volumes of his boosted confidence.

In Irene's eyes, these changes were a pleasant and welcoming one.

Simon who was silent all this while nodded at her compliment and spoke "I see so six hours passed just like that. Although I tried my best to remember the sensation of the [Mana Lines], I still failed to grasp most of it. I can see why this skill is only in the hands of those level 500 and above. It truly is a skill that could completely transform a person".

Simon clenched his fist in determination, though he failed to grasp it this time, it did not mean that there was no other opportunity to grasp it. After the cooldown of the skill resets, he planned to activate it once again in hopes of comprehending the [Mana Lines] skill.

'It seems he does know his limits and even while knowing that, he strives to improve himself' Irene thought to herself. From what she could tell, Simon's talent wasn't that high and it took him a while to catch onto something.

But in the world where strength ruled supreme, talent alone wasn't the deciding factor. One needed a goal, unyielding will and determination to improve. All of which was present in Simon.

When she told him to try and sense the mana lines established during the activation of his Phantasmal tier skill, she wasn't hoping for him to grasp it since it was impossible to do it in one go.

The mana lines used during the activation of the Phantasmal tier skill wasn't any ordinary tier but the Legendary tier mana lines after all. One which is exclusive and original only to him.

What she was hoping from this experience was for Simon to get a feeling of what a perfected [Mana Lines] looked like. Anything more than that would be asking too much from him since she herself knew how hard it is to acquire a rare skill from the scratch.

Simon able to grasp something out of this experience was a pleasant surprise. A Rare skill like [Mana Lines] has a possibility to evolve a total of three that is to say it has three tiers namely Superior, Ancient and Legendary.

What Simon had experienced from the activation of his [Ancestral Symbol Ignition] was the Legendary tier mana lines a Rare skill could possibly reach. It was no exaggeration to say that it was impossible to fully grasp such a complex mana lines in just one try even for a genius.

Not to mention there was no need for him to recreate the exact same mana lines formed inside his body during the activation of his skill. Even if he was able to recreate an imperfect version of it with lot less paths and pales in comparison to the original, Simon would still be able to take the first step and acquire the skill.

Perfecting the mana lines to its Legendary tier should be his ultimate goal before he reaches the rank of Demon Duke.

Irene believed that Simon himself realised that after he sorted out all of his thoughts while in a self-transient state.

“Alright now that you have already seen how the perfect version of your mana lines looks like, it would be fine if you could slowly and steadily grasp the sensation of it. But first, you should focus on creating a mana lines that you have experienced for yourself as close to the original as possible.”

“Don’t worry about making mistakes after all what we are trying to achieve is not the Legendary tier but the ordinary [Mana Lines]. You can work your way to that tier after you acquire it”.

Irene said as she used her mana to fork out something from the pond and passed it onto to him.

Looking at the control she had over her mana, Simon was once again astounded. The pond currently contained a ridiculous amount of turbulent and pure mystical energy that kept on increasing with time. It should be extremely hard for a person’s mana to penetrate through it without being disrupted in the middle.

However, Irene had achieved just that so effortlessly that Simon was left speechless. He knew first-hand how atrocious the mystical energy inside the pond of serenity was since even his body was unable to take it.

It took every mana he had just to keep on circulating the wildly rushing mystical energy within him. Though Simon was left speechless he wasn’t surprised by Irene after all, he knew that she was on a completely different realm than him even if her level was below him.

‘Will I be able to close the huge gulf between our realms even by just a single step if I acquire the [Mana Lines] skill?’ Simon wondered as he caught the object that was tossed to him.

‘What is this feeling... I’m getting more and more excited’ It maybe partly due to his demon ancestry and partly because he could clearly see his goal, but just the thought of getting stronger and taking another step towards bridging the gap in their strengths, exhilarated him.

If earlier he was levelling up and increasing his strength because he wanted to survive and not get crushed under the overwhelming power of others. Now though it was as if another goal to get stronger had sprouted in his heart without even him knowing.

Shifting his attention towards the object in his hand, Simon carefully inspected it. The object was an oval-shaped white stone with no special feature to speak off. While holding the stone, he could feel a clear chilling sensation coming off of it.

Simon did not what the stone was but since it came from within the pond, there was no way it was an ordinary item. The previous time when he dived inside the pond, he had gotten hold of the scarlet mutation crystal which induces a mutation on the monster consuming its essence and making it able to harness the fire attribute of mana.

Although he hasn’t used the crystal yet, he still understood how precious those crystals were for his dungeon. If possible, he wanted the pond to produce some more of it and of higher grades.

Simon had no doubts that the oval stone in his would be as useful as the scarlet mutation crystal. And since Irene took the effort to fork it out of the pond and present it to him, it must mean that stone was beneficial for him.

Using [Analysis] on the stone, it showed him that the stone was called Serenity stone and its rank to his amazement was a [B]. What did it mean? It meant that the serenity stone was a rank above the grade of the scarlet mutation crystal he got from the pond.

That was not all, it was his second time getting a [B] rank out of something. Although he had upgraded his Scarlet Blazing Flame Blade from the multitudes of [B] rank items, it was the result of the [Upgrade] option of his [Armory].

Grabbing the stone tightly in his hand, he read the description provided by the [Analysis].

A bizarre shaped stone condensed from the pure energy of the mystical veins and holds the properties of the pond of serenity. When shattered, it creates an impromptu effect around the place that helps a person to increase their concentration and focus.

Wait a minute? What kind of effect is that? Increasing the concentration and focus of a person... wasn't the effect mentioned just like what he had experienced when he had reached a self-transient state of mind?

Seeing the astonished expression of Simon, Irene silently explained pointing at the pond of serenity.

"I have already told this before... but the pond is going to be one of the greatest treasures in your dungeon. Honestly, when I saw the stone being formed at the bottom a few days ago, even I was surprised. That stone in your hand isn't something that should be in the possession of a Demon Viscount. As for its effects, it is as you read. The serenity stone will help you reach a self-transient state of mind more easily. That is why the stone is ranked as [B], its effect is just that beneficial for those who are in need of it. Since it is a one-use item, use it carefully in the future".

After saying that, she beckoned with her hand indicating Simon to come nearer to the pond. After stepping closer to the edge of the pond, he matched Irene's gaze and also tried to pry through the bottom of the pond.

Since he knew there were all sorts of treasure growing at the bottom of the pond, he was all the more curious.

Gazing at the pond, Irene said "Seven years... it is not a lot of time. If you are absolutely planning on keeping your words with the Ancient Titan Treant and aim for becoming the ruler of the Ghastly Winding Forest, then you must train with even more intensity. I'll also help you in every way I can".

Hearing her words, Simon clenched his hands and nodded in appreciation. He had to admit that with just a few words of her, Simon was able to see clearly what he needed to achieve his seven years goal.

If there was any doubt of hesitation in his heart before, now it was all gone. Irene had proved herself that she was plenty strong and knowledgeable enough to teach and show him the way.

Chapter 178: Serenity Stone (3)

Simon had a rather unique mindset, it matter not if the one teaching him was his own summon. As long as they have skills and knowledge that bested him in every aspect, he had no qualms being guided by them.

Simon remembered a memory back when he was alive on earth. It was during his second year of working for the Astro revolution company, he had met many kinds of people. Some of them were good to him and showed him the way, while there were also some who wanted to drag him down and put him in his place.

Some of the senior game developer of the company saw his quick rise and performance as a threat and tried to pressure him whenever they found an opportunity. Especially the ones who were in the same department as him in that year.

Just because they were working for the company longer than he did, they were jealous of his performance and tried to shut him out of the circle.

Saying things like “Juniors shouldn’t try to outshine their seniors”.

“They who have worked for the company longer had much more experience and knowledge than a greenhorn who was simply trying to gain attention from his subpar work and this and that...”.

When in reality, they just wanted to take it easy and didn’t want to expend more efforts on top of the years of work they already put forth.

At the same time, being a senior in the company and all, it won’t do if the juniors who lacked skills and knowledge, performed better than them.

Simon still remembered that some of them even tried to pile their work on his desk, trying to suppress him in every way they can. They even shut him out from the social circle spouting comments like ‘This should put him in his place’, ‘it’s a good opportunity for him to learn to respect his seniors’ behind his back.

Their nasty work environment had become their ethics.

Although it is true that Simon had to face a harsh path to climb his way up, not all of the employees were like that. There were even some who while knowing that this would put the junior’s performance above theirs, they still helped him.

Simon took pride in his tenacity to absorb knowledge from whomever it may come from. As long as they could help him become better and fill the gap in his knowledge, he had no qualms to acknowledge the person was better than him.

It was the same in this life too. It seemed that even when his race had completely changed after reincarnating in this world, his curious mind still had that insatiable thirst for knowledge. And Irene who had a far better grasp of skill and mystical energy than him was the perfect person in his view to guide him.

“The Serenity Stone although is ranked at [B], depending on the situation it can become far more precious than even some [A] rank items. It would have been better if the pond had produced multiple at once but from the looks of it, the rest are still in the early stages of being formed. It may take as long as a week for more of them to be produced”

Irene while still examining the bottom of the pond, decided to nonchalantly drop a bomb.

Simon widened his eyes as soon as he heard that. Serenity stone, an item ranked as [B] by the Analysis was being produced at the bottom of his pond and that too multiple at once.

What kind of concept was that? And what was even more shocking was the casual attitude that Irene had adapted while talking about it. Although Simon had already guessed it, but to Irene, a [B] rank item was nothing.

Simon gave a helpless laugh as he looked at the Serenity stone in his hand. Given the density of mystical energy inside the pond, and the thick mist covering the surface of the water, it became impossible for him to pry anything.

Even though he was curious as to what other items were being produced inside the pond, he could only give up for the time being. Once he was strong enough to immerse inside the pond for long, he could dive and have a look at them himself.

Clenching his hand and resolving himself to train even stronger, Simon asked the question he wanted to ask for a while “What should I train in next?”. After having a taste of the sensation of the mana lines from his Phantasmal tier skill, he could no longer contain his wildly beating heart and excitement.

Looking at the overflowing enthusiasm of Simon, Irene’s next words threw a bucket of cold water to calm him down.

“One shouldn’t overdo things and bite more than one can chew. For the upcoming days, I think you should just focus on getting a hold of the sensation of the mana lines from your memories while soaking in the pond every day. The density of mana near the pond is beneficial enough for you to break through the level 300 barrier”.

“Once your Phantasmal tier skill is off cooldown, use the Serenity stone to enter the self-transient state once again as that would hasten the process of you acquiring the [Mana Lines] skill”.

Simon listened to what Irene had to say before making a mental note of it. He knew that mindlessly defeating monsters wouldn’t get him anywhere since he couldn’t get past the level 300 barrier by simply doing that.

Hence what Irene suggested sounded even more convincing than his way of single-mindedly gaining experience. Once he was past level 300, he can then once again begin his process of grinding experience once again till he reaches another barrier all the while focusing on acquiring the [Mana Lines] skill.

On this note, Simon completely agreed with Irene to focus on one skill at a time as doing otherwise was simply too cumbersome and would eat up a lot of his time. At the same time, it did not guarantee any result and might even slow down his progress, thus affecting his growth.

Acquiring the [Mana Lines] was his immediate priority.

While he was absorbed in his thoughts, Irene’s figure just like an illusion silently disappeared from the surrounding. Although one can say she had changed somewhat after meeting Simon, her usual cold and aloof temperament was still there.

Therefore, once she was done helping him for the day, she silently left the place. Simon shook his head and sighed helplessly. While he can make up for the distance between the strength by putting in more effort, the matters about emotion couldn’t be rushed.

It was today itself that he learned that he knew nothing about Irene, nor her origin or about the incident that happened a while ago. While he wished for her to open up, Simon understood well that whatever problems that Irene was facing, was something too much for the current him to handle or even comprehend.

There was no way the current him could even provide a sliver of help in any way. If he wanted to be any assistance to her then his only choice was to get stronger.

A week passed just like that and Simon just like how he was instructed, fully devoted himself to training near the pond of serenity. During this time, Simon tried many times to enter the self transient state without using the Serenity stone but failed every time.

It wasn't like he was not trying hard but no matter what he tried or did, the state of mind that he oh so easily achieved during the previous two times of his, appeared extremely elusive and difficult to grasp.

Clearing his mind of all its thoughts and achieving a state of tranquillity sounded easier said than done.

It was only now that he understood how precious the serenity stone that was ranked as [B] by the Analysis was and how special and difficult it was to enter the self transient state. He also understood why Irene said that depending on the situation, the Serenity stone might be even precious than some [A] rank items.

The previous two times when he achieved that state of mind, made him conceited enough to think that he could enter the state any time he want. This past week of constant failures was like a wake-up call for him who was living on a delusion.

While he couldn't reach the self transient state, he did quite well on his part of feeling the sensation of the mana lines from his memories and recreating it, albeit the progress was very slow.

During this past week, Simon dived inside the pond every day trying to break his record of enduring for twenty-five seconds even by an additional second.

The result was what felt like a pond filled with boiling hot water filled with electric currents, he was able to finally endure it for twenty-eight seconds. It might not sound impressive to others, but to Simon, it was an achievement he thought was worthy enough.

After all, just like him the pond of Serenity was also constantly evolving and the mystical energy being deposited by the huge mystical veins beneath the ground, was getting denser and thicker

every day. One could even say that the pond of serenity was significantly different from what it was a week ago.

That was not all, his progress did not stop there. While it was true that he couldn't enter the self transient state which considerably slowed down his progress; nonetheless, he was able to finally break through the level 300 barrier.

Chapter 179: Obsidian Energy Exuder

With the help of the abundant mana produced by the enriched Trees of Mana and the pond, he was able to step at level 301. Although the difference was of just a level, it wasn't something any amount of hunting monsters for experience could cover.

His speed which had been reduced to a crawl after he approached near the 300 level wall, disappeared as if it was never there after he diligently trained his skills and soaked himself inside the pond every day.

The barrier that would have otherwise restricted a Demon Viscount for as long a couple of years, was easily broken apart by Simon in a week of time. If any high ranking Demon Noble knew what Simon had achieved within a measly time of a week, they wouldn't even be able to believe it.

Simon was not aware of it but Irene had precisely seen through the problem that he would have otherwise faced if he had simply concentrated on just increasing his level. His growth would have met the wall and it would have taken more than a few years to get past it.

During these past weeks, while Simon fully focused on achieving a self transient state and recalling the sensation of the [Mana Lines] over and over again, Irene had stealthily visited to check on his progress many times without even him realizing.

Although she pretended to be indifferent in front of others, those who were familiar with her would know that it wasn't her true nature and something that was born out of the innate prowess of her.

Simon had benefited tremendously from a week of training near the pond; however, he wasn't the only one who had gotten stronger. The Bloodthorn demonic warhorse who was hibernating near the area, benefitted equally from the dense amount of mana that shrouded the area.

Like a sponge, its body soaked all of the surrounding mana thus strengthening its body and increasing its level. Its robust body became even more vigorous and the flame-like mane of its body

burned a tinge of golden indicating that the intermediate tier [Flame Magic Mastery] of the warhorse, had reached quite the profound level.

It wasn't just the physical change but even its skills and stats had increased.

Although it had yet to reach level 300, there was no denying that the warhorse was steadily approaching closer. There was no telling how much stronger it would be after breaking through the level 300 barrier.

Just like a shell, the thick mist enshrouded the deeply hibernating warhorse within.

Slowly opening his eyes, Simon observed the changes in his body and clenched his hands. He could feel the power coursing through his body and the mana circulating inside his body while erratic most of the time, was starting to flow in a fixed path.

The speed at which mana flowed within his body, was many times faster than what it was before.

The rate at which one can circulate mana through their body also determines the speed of the activation of their skills and magic. In other words, Simon was able to cast magic, skills and display the might of a Demon Viscount more efficiently than before.

While it is true that he had yet to achieve the [Mana Lines] skill, he could see the obvious changes occurring within his body.

"[Mana Lines] it truly is a skill worthy of being a rare skill. The effects of the skill can make all the lower-ranked beings of this world covet for it" Simon said while looking at his status.

The [Ancestral Symbol Ignition] skill was off cooldown and could be used once again, he also has the Serenity stone which he had not used yet precisely for this moment.

The Serenity stone when shattered releases an effect that increases the focus and concentration of a person helping them reach the self transient state. These past few days of repeated failures had told him how difficult it was to reach such a state of mind.

"With the help of this stone, it would be possible to reach that state of mind once again" Simon said as he brought the stone out of his inventory.

[Inventory] was one of the functions of the [Main Menu] that allows him to store up to ten thousand items in a sub dimensional space. It was quite a useful skill that allowed him to store items without having him physically carry them.

He remembered Irene telling him that the stone was being formed at the bottom of the pond of serenity and it would take a week or so for another one to be formed. It was precisely because he did not know if the other had formed or not, that he was hesitant to use the one in his hand.

The serenity stone was a once use item which means that after being shattered, the effects inside the stone would be released and it would return to being an ordinary rubble.

Deliberating over the decision for a while, Simon finally decided to use it. While the stone was precious, it was an item meant to be used. There was no reason to hesitate over it.

In any case, acquiring the [Mana Lines] in a short period of time should be his top priority in which case he needed his mind to achieve a self transient state and the serenity stone was necessary for that.

The thought that the pond was able to produce more of the serenity stone eased up his mind a bit. Taking a deep breath, he focused his senses and was about to shatter the oval white stone in his hand when all of a sudden, Cecilia voice came from amidst the mist.

“Big brother... Big brother... can you hear me?” It had been two weeks since Simon last saw her after she went with her clan to the floor designated as their village.

For her to be here, something must have come up. Thinking so Simon kept the serenity stone back in his [Inventory] and stood up.

Turning around, he saw the figure of Cecilia as she ran through the mist. Finally finding him, she took hurried breaths before saying “huff... huff... big brother I finally found you hehe”.

Her face at this moment was that of an excited one and no matter how she tried, she couldn't suppress the joy that beamed out of her.

Seeing her merry face, Simon rubbed her head before asking curiously “What’s the matter Cecilia? Why are you in such a rush... shouldn’t you be with your clansmen helping them build a new village?”.

Hearing his question, Cecilia couldn’t help but pout.

“Big brother I was helping my clan to build a new village but a few days ago grandpa Fennel told me that they can handle the rest and I should head back to the main floor. Although I wanted to help till the end, they did not budge an inch and so I came back here. When I got back I was informed by Elder sister Irene that you were in the middle of training near the pond and I shouldn’t disturb you” She protested.

After saying that, she looked at Simon and added “Big brother I was waiting for you to come out of your training for so long”.

Simon was surprised a little when he heard that Cecilia was waiting for him to finish his training. He asked in concern “Hmm? You were waiting for me? Did something come up?”.

Nodding her head, Cecilia said excitedly “When I went to check on the progress of the village yesterday, Grandpa Fennel told me to bring you along. Hehe, it seems that he and the other wants to show you the village they made”.

Whenever she talked about the village they made on the new floor, Cecilia’s face beamed with joy that was difficult for a girl like her to hide.

As if suddenly remembering something, she looked at Simon and pulled his hands “Oh right big brother are you done with your training? If so then we can go right now. Everybody is waiting for you to show up”.

Without even letting him answer, Cecilia pulled him as if trying to show from her action how eager she was to bring him to their new village. Simon shook his head in defeat and instantly dropped his previous idea of training some more.

Given how excited Cecilia was, there was no way to stop her until she brings him to their village.

“Why not go along... it seems that floor had changed quite significantly since the last time you saw it” It was at this moment that Irene’s cold and aloof voice rang out from amidst the mist.

Unbeknownst to anyone, Irene had silently appeared near the area. The moment her figure came into view, it was as if all the splendor of the world was stolen by her.

“Elder sister Irene...” the instant Cecilia saw Irene, she ran towards her and nuzzled in her embrace. It seemed that the both of them became even closer in this period of time when Simon was busy training.

Name:- Simon

Race:- Demon Viscount

Titles:- Demon of Pride [Incomplete Fragment 1/5]

Stats:-

Level:- 301

HP:- 45,241

MP:- 63,220

Strength:- 2803

Defence:- 3003

Agility:- 3405

Magic:- 3805

Endurance:- 3104

Luck:- 2102

Skills:- Language Comprehension, Analysis, Flame Magic Mastery, Gale Magic Mastery, Electro Magic Mastery, High-Speed Thought Processing, High-Speed Regeneration, High-Speed Flight, Super Strength, Body Enhancement, Fire Resistance, Wind Resistance, Electro resistance Pain Resistance, Blunt Damage Resistance, Sense Presence, Demonic Eyes, Super Agility, Enhanced Endurance, Super Magic, Super Defence, Minimal Mana Consumption

Amalgamation Skills:- [Flame-Gale Mastery], [Electro-Flame Mastery]

Inherent Skills:- Dungeon Creation, Main Menu, Ancestral Symbol Ignition

Chapter 180: Obsidian Energy Exuder (2)

Irene gently càrèssed the emerald hair of Cecilia before observing Simon. Noticing the changes that Simon had gone through in the span of just two weeks, she couldn't help but arch her brows in surprise.

Even she didn't expect that Simon would be able to imitate the mana lines he had experienced when activating his Phantasmal tier skill so soon. Although it was still imperfect and nowhere near the original one, he was still able to recreate the paths for his mana to flow in from the bits and pieces of his memory.

From what she could tell, the mana flowing inside Simon's body was starting to flow in a fixed path while still being irregular most of the time. When Simon is able to fully will the mana flowing inside his body to circulate in a fixed path, will he be able to acquire the [Mana Lines] skill.

"Your training is going rather smoothly. You can take this chance and head for the Forest Spring Spirit floor for a change of pace. Even if you rush it, there is no guarantee that you would get the skill at the earliest. Instead, it may hamper your progress" Irene said as if seeing through the inner thoughts of his mind.

It was just as she said, Simon was consciously or subconsciously trying to rush things once again. Deliberating over her words, Simon calmed his mind and nodded his head. He agreed with her request and prepared to teleport with Cecilia when she pulled Irene along.

Irene made a complicated face but seeing the sparkle in Cecilia's eyes, she knew that there was no escaping her clutches.

Opening his [Main Menu] which had merged with the dungeon's menu and had become one, Simon used the teleport option of the [Dungeon] function to swiftly teleport them to the floor where the Forest spring Spirit village was.

As soon as he teleported to the new floor along with Cecilia and Irene, Simon was astounded to see the view in front of him. The place in just a short amount of time looked completely different than the last time he saw it.

The floor which he designed similar to the tall forested areas of Ancient Treants, had changed to become a completely different floor. The tall trees covering the area had varied colours and shapes.

Even their type and species was something that was unregistered in his [Main Menu]. That was not all, the plants and herbs growing around the area were filled with vitality to the point where they looked fresh and brimming with life.

Each and every grass had a utility of its own and the vast diversity in which they were growing, made Simon widen his eyes like saucers.

A breeze bringing along the fresh scent of fruits and plants blew across the area making it quite an appealing sight.

The path to the village at the centre of the floor was laid out with stones that made treading on it quite easier and also displayed the taste of the Forest Spring Spirits that were said to be the overseer of the forest.

The farmlands cultivated near the village, had ample fruits and berries some of which Simon had seen back during the banquet they had in the Ancient Treants territory, releasing a sweet scent.

Just past the farmland was the bamboo forest and beside it was the new village that the Forest Spring Spirit race had built. The place was so beautiful that Simon was stunned briefly.

As with their previous village, the houses they built were also made with bamboo which was decorated with their native artistic sense.

Wandering inside their village, Simon felt like he had arrived in a completely different place that was outside of his dungeon. While he was internally marvelling at the scene, the Forest Spring Spirits that spotted him hurriedly bowed their heads and showed their respects.

It didn't take long for a crowd to gather near him and before long, the only remaining elder of the Forest Spring Spirits, Fennel came to greet him.

"Lord Simon, it is our pléasure that you greet us with your presence in our village. On behalf of all my clansmen, I welcome you to the Forest Spring Spirit village". Right after he said that, the rest of the villagers also followed suit.

"We welcome you to the forest spring Spirit village".

All of them bowed their heads deeply, Simon was not only their saviour/benefactor but from this point on, also their protector and lord. The respect and reverence they showed to him was no less than what they showed to their patriarch or maybe even more.

Simon who was not used to being held in such veneration, couldn't help but make a troubled face. Although he felt uneasy, he didn't stop them since their action represented their loyalty and conviction they held for him.

After the crowd settled down, he asked Fennel the reason behind calling him here. He did not believe that he was called here simply to marvel at the changes of the floor.

It was as he had expected, after hearing Simon, Fennel didn't seem surprised. Glancing at the centre of the village, he smiled earnestly and said "there is indeed a matter I wanted to discuss with our lord about and something I wanted you to see".

Right after saying that, he turned towards the direction he was glancing and started walking. Simon did not ask any further and simply tagged along. Behind him followed Irene, Cecilia and rest of the villagers.

While on their way, Simon remembered that the direction that they were walking in, was where he had set up another pond of serenity beside the altered one he had on his main floor.

'Did some changes had taken place in that pond of serenity too' Simon thought as they approached closer and before the thoughts in his mind could settle down, the answer was laid in front of him.

Instead of the pond of serenity, it was the obsidian slates that he had placed around, that got affected. The seven or so obsidian slates that should be around the pond had disappeared and what was around was a huge black stone tens of meters in size that appeared to be a gigantified version of the obsidian slate at first glance.

'What was going on?' was the first question that popped up in his mind when he saw the scene that lay in front of him.

The huge obsidian slate sat at the centre of the pond and released waves of pure mystical energy that cleansed the surrounding land and air. Even from this distance, Simon felt chills when the waves of energy brushed past his body.

If the energy is this strong even from this distance, he couldn't imagine what the effects would be if he approached near the stone. Bending his body, he touched the surface of the water and felt that the density of mystical energy within the water was quite thick but other than that, it wasn't affected much.

Simon immediately understood that the only thing that got altered was the obsidian slate. That would mean that the meter and a half big obsidian slates that he had placed around the pond to absorb the excess mystical energy around the area had suddenly in the span of a few days had become tens of meters huge.

Obsidian slates although was able to absorb mana to some extent, it shouldn't be able to expand in size. The sheer size of the black stone made Simon unable to believe that it was the same meter and a half obsidian slate he had placed around here.

"This?..." even Simon was speechless when he saw the spectacle in front of him not to mention others who had no idea what the huge black stone was in the first place.

Fennel càressed his beard and added, "I don't know what these huge black stones that Lord Simon had placed here are but from the energy they are releasing, I surmise that it is something very precious... is it alright to keep them here?".

The way he spoke was as if he believed that everything that had happened was according to Simon. Simon who was still out of sorts, felt embarrassed when he heard Fennel phrase it like that. If he had to be honest, even he did not foresee this kind of change coming.

Although he had guessed that there would be some changes after the Forest Spring Spirit clan that can harness the power of the nature settled here, but even he couldn't have guessed that the one affected wouldn't be the pond and instead the obsidian slates he placed around it.

Simon's mouth twitched and he was about to say something when he finally noticed the peculiarities in Fennel's words.

"Wait a minute... what do you mean by huge black stones?" Simon asked as if suddenly remembering something.

"Ehhh?... Does Lord Simon not know?" Fennel blinked his eyes a few times before saying "There are seven of these huge black stones spread all across the floor. I thought it was Lord Simon who placed them there... isn't that so?".

Simon was too focused on digesting the words that Fennel had just said than answering him. 'Seven huge black stones... there is no mistake those should be the seven obsidian slates that I placed here.. But how did they spread all across the floor' Simon had many questions that he wanted the answers for.