

## D. of Pride 341

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Vouves shook his head seeing just how unaware the boy was of his surrounding gazes. But it couldn't be blamed on him since he knew that his master had completely ignored teaching him all these aspects and only drilled him with what was necessary for a battle.

"[Howling Beast Roar] to think that a young man like him could master such a difficult skill, it seems Brutus has drilled all his skills onto his son".

Henry Alaric Ellesmere, the king of Ellesmere kingdom commented. The young man beside him named Erwin, nodded his head and said with a solemn tone.

"Even if it was me, I would have also got caught off-guard by that skill. It seemed that he was holding onto it all this time but had to use it because of the persistence of his opponent".

"Haha, it was a good thing that he did. Now with this additional information, third brother can take precaution if he comes across Marcus in the future rounds" Alstin laughed and commented off-handedly.

Cynthia on the side, sighed at those words of her big brother. He was underestimating the top five guilds too much. Since they have shown one of their skills, they would naturally have some preparations for the future rounds and Erwin was yet to fight a single battle.

Each participant had to fight a total of three battles out of which the top ten would be selected to participate for the final day. These top 50 participants were selected after sifting through thousands of participants and were a genius above a genius.

It wouldn't be easy to grab three victories against them without revealing some of your hidden cards.

After the first battle, a few more participants came up the stage, some of them were even from the top five guilds. While their battle cannot be said as very enthralling, it was still very eventful for the audience.

The star participants of their guilds and factions also went up to the stage. Erwin Curtis Ellesmere, Alice Alma Sanguine, Hallie May, Graydon Brown each of them participated in a series of breathtaking battles.

In the case of Erwin, Alice and Hallie, they each met a difficult opponent in their third battle forcing them to reveal some of their hidden cards. The crowd was taken aback by their mastery of skills, the level of this year's tournament, had completely preceded all the previous tournaments.

Vouves in particular, was amazed by the skill level of Hallie May from Magician's Guild. Her mastery in magic and her rare class that made her able to use powerful frost magic, made even him surprised.

Alice and Hallie were both around level 400 although the latter was a few years older than the former, her talent still couldn't be denied. Vouves couldn't help but look forward to the final day where these two might come face to face in one of the matches.

After his first Match, Marcus stopped holding back and swiftly disposed all his opponents no matter if they were from the top five guilds or any other faction. Of course, he wasn't foolish enough to display all of his cards; nonetheless, his opponents weren't easy enough to allow him to win without giving his all.

With that Marcus, secured his three victories and a spot in the top ten. The next ones to move up were Erwin and Denzel, the prince from the Sanguine empire whose level was by far the highest amongst all the participants and who made his fights seem all too easy.

Though the same cannot be said for his opponents who seemed to be in a state of shock and self-contemplation after their battle.

"Ah! Rival" Seeing that Marcus was looking at him, the boy gave an energetic smile.

"Hmph" Marcus snorted before shifting his gaze. With those three as the start, more and more people started moving up.

Obviously, it also meant that more and more participants were also being eliminated. Members from the top five guilds other than their star participants, were dropping out one after the other unable to keep up with the skill level of their opponents.

By now most of the participants from the big guilds and other various factions of the kingdom were all eliminated or became the stepping stones for others. Most of the 50 participants had all gone through their three battles with only a few remaining.

"Next battle, Connor Rees from Crimson Demolition Guild—Vs – Ivan Mavis Blackthorn from the kingdom of Blackthorn".

The audience who thought that they could take this chance to breathe after witnessing one spectacular battle after another, planted their buttocks on the seat once again. The opponents who were walking up to the stage, were participants whose powers were already proven and known by most of the people. Hence the enthusiasm level of the people was also high.

"The kingdom of Blackthorn huh... it seems that those peculiar weapons are about to come up again"

"You are right, although most of the participants from their kingdom are eliminated, those peculiar artifacts and weapons of theirs did give a lot of trouble to others"

"Well, even if that was the case, they cannot win against one of the two youngest genius of Crimson demolition guild"

"Right, right... I heard Connor and Tyler are both brothers and the guild master of the Crimson Demolition guild is trying to groom one of them as the future guild leader".

Murmur and hubbubs of the audience could be heard from every corner of the coliseum making the members of the crimson Demolition Guild proudly puff their chest. Although they did not have a super genius like Marcus or Hallie May, they still had the two young brothers whose age did not exceed thirty years.

"Guild master, do you think he can win?".

Kenan Lantz who was eliminated on the second round by a participant from the Kingdom of blackthorn holding those peculiar weapon, asked.

The guild master of the crimson demolition guild deeply glanced at Connor on the stage, and said with confidence.

"While his level may be lower than his opponent, Connor and Tyler have exceeded all of you in skills. Not only are they a genius, but they are also more hardworking than anyone else. What they are lacking in, can be made up with their skills and this tournament will allow them to grow and reach new heights".

"Though it will be good if he can get into the top ten, that way we will be the only guild occupying two spots which no other factions, and the top guilds were able to do. At the very least, I know he can do it".

Seeing their guild master speak with so much confidence, the members from the Crimson demolition guild couldn't help but get excited.

"Whew, look at how the crowd is going crazy. I didn't think so but it seems you really are popular" Ivan whistled and lightly remarked.

"I will win" Connor laid down his conviction.

"Hehh, are you that type of person, the type 'No nonsense and always serious'. Ahaha, am I being ignored now? Well it can't be helped I guess ... let us have a good match then".

The two of them exchanged a few words before the referee blew the whistle. The no-nonsense type Connor, immediately opened up a distance between his opponent and started casting one spell after another.

His class was a rare mage class called [Rapid Spellcaster] while his opponent clearly had some rare warrior class. In which case, he would be at a disadvantage if he let his opponent freely cross the distance and utilise his skill.

Other than that, he also had to be careful of those peculiar artifacts these people from the kingdom of blackthorn possessed.

"Flame Magic Mastery- [Flame Bullet barrage]"

With a spirited shout from him, multiple flame balls the size of an egg, materialised before spinning at a rapid speed. With a single thought from Connor, the hundreds of flame balls started flying towards his opponent with the speed of a bullet.

Ivan who was the target of this attack was yet to move away from his spot, his lips held that small smile from start to end.

BOOM... BOOOM... BANG...

A rain of flame bullets wreaked havoc in one area of the stage and completely devastated it. The whole stage trembled and the vibration could be felt even from the audience stands.

GULP... the crowd involuntarily gulped, it hadn't even been three seconds since the battle started however, it was already so heated.

After the barrage ended and the dust settled, a figure could be seen standing still at that exact same place. When the spectators looked carefully, they saw he was holding a black shield that looked very grotesque.

All the attacks earlier from Connor was easily defended by that shield.

"Tch" Connor clicked his tongue and started casting new sets of spells. His opponent having a defensive artefact rather than an offensive one made him all the more troublesome to face.

One magic after another came targeting at Ivan, however, none of them managed to even touch the edges of his clothes. The shield in his hand, defended him from every attack.

"These people from the Kingdom of Blackthorn do really possess some peculiar weapons. That shield, possesses the same energy as the sword your opponent had used but it is much more stronger than that sword".

"That young man from the Crimson demolition guild made a right decision to open up the distance between them considering the other guy was higher level warrior. Nonetheless, the existence of that shield changes everything"

Brutus commented locking his brows. Beside him, Marcus was intensely observing the match.

"Hehe" Ivan laughed, now that he has shown the other party that using long-distance attack was useless, that left only one other path for the latter open.

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And just like he had predicted, his opponent closed the gap that they themselves have created to bombard him with magic all around.

"Smart move; however, you are still too inexperienced... [Battle Protection]" Ivan used one of his class-specific skills that complemented with the shield he was holding and the area that the black shield covered increased at that instant.

All the magic even the ones targeting his bind spots and tricky angles was easily defended by just a single rotation from Ivan.

"Is that all you have".

Connor's eyes were enraged hearing the taunt from his opponent and in his fury, he cast a spell which could easily be disrupted given the distance between them.

"That idiot" the guild leader of the Crimson demolition guild smacked his fist on his seat.

"What's wrong guild master?" Kenan Lantz hurriedly asked. From his point of view, the situation was still fine as long as Connor could find a way to get past the defence of that shield, he didn't expect the guild master to react otherwise.

"That fool he fell for such an obvious Taunt"

"Eh? That was a skill?"

"Most likely it is a [Derogatory Taunt], a class-specific skill of [tainted Knight] class and such. For Connor to be using a powerful intermediate tier magic that requires a long time to prepare at this moment, there is no other way to see it".

The guild master explained sounding a little serious.

Only after chanting the spell midway, did Connor realise that he had fallen for a taunt skill. This realisation had come a step too late, if he stopped the magic midway he would suffer some dire internal injuries but if he did not stop it, he risked getting attacked by his opponent.

"Tainted Shield Bash" Ivan immediately grabbed this opportunity and smacked his great shield towards Connor's head.

The latter realised that he cannot get hit by this class specific skill of a warrior that immobilised and pushed the enemy back for a second or two. In an actual battle, where even a second can decide the outcome of a fight, it would be fatal to get hit by such an attack.

p Steeling his will, Connor made up his mind, before the attack actually hit him, he stopped his chanting and put his staff in front of him.

<strong> BANG...</strong> a powerful force hit his staff and then his body before his entire self was sent airborne a few meters away.

"Hohh, you managed to stop that attack from landing huh. However, I wonder what price you paid for that".

Ivan laughed after seeing the former spit out a mouthful of blood. He kept his shield in his space ring and brought out a crude black sword instead.

The audience was stunned when they saw such a scene, Connor was already having a hard time getting past the defence of that shield but now, he also has to care about his opponent's offence.

A series of black blade shadows came flying at Connor whose energy was currently rampaging inside him. Forcefully gulping down the mouthful of blood, he conjured a novice tier magic just in time.

"[Flash Fire]".

Three to five fireballs that had an intense shine to them flew forward and burst apart. Just like a sun, they brightened the whole stage and forced everyone to cover their eyes as the light was just too much.

A few seconds later when they opened their eyes again, they saw the participant from the kingdom of blackthorn stand in the same place while Connor was a few meters away from him now. However unlike the former, the latter looked clearly tattered and a little tired. Obviously, some of those black blade shadows managed to hit him.

"That was quite the circus trick, I am amazed. You have successfully managed to open up a distance between us so what now?" Ivan asked smiling gleefully, he continued to mount pressure by swinging that sword and sending those black blade shadows at his opponent.

"Haa... haa... don't think that you have won yet. That strength from those weapons of yours is just secondary, it is not yours" Connor retorted dodging left and right.

"Haha, what a poor excuse. The power of the artifacts belongs to the one who wields them" Ivan laughed.

The tournament did not bar the participants from using their own weapons and artifacts. In a way having powerful artifacts displayed one's capability and power. So Ivan was in no way violating the rules.

Connor looked back at the audience stands and coincidentally their eyes met. His brother Tyler who had already moved up to the final day, was looking with a tinge of worry at him.

Connor gave a smile and shifted his gaze back towards his enemy. He was not like Marcus who had a skill that attacked one's mind and couldn't be blocked physically. He had only one path for him to take from the beginning.

"I'll show you that just by having a strong weapon doesn't make you powerful..." right after he declared that, mana like a broken dam poured out of his body and flowed inside the staff inside his hand.

The mana around the surrounding started stirring up indicating that a big magic capable of covering a large amount of area, was invoked.

"Hohh, I didn't expect a participant of his potential to have learned that skill, your kingdom of Ellesmere does indeed have some unpolished gems" Davis Hall, the special guest and the officer of the Headquarters of Adventurer's Association, commented.



As a mage who had climbed his way up on his own, he couldn't help but relate with the young man on the stage.

Henry Alaric Ellesmere seated beside him, smiled and nodded. These young participants were the future of their kingdom, hearing them being praised by a man of Davis Hall's calibre who had been watching the battles in silence all along, made him happy.

Feeling the disturbance in the surrounding mana, Ivan narrowed his eyes. As a warrior, he knew not to give a mage enough time to cast their spell, if he did they could dish out a spell powerful enough to change the tide of the battle and this was one of the instances, a basic rule of thumb.

He brandished the sword in his right hand and sent a few of the black bale shadows towards Connor in an attempt to disturb him only to receive another surprise.

SHH.. SHH.. SHH.. all of the blade shadows crashed onto the ground with none being able to hit their target. It wasn't like Ivan's precision had gone down, his attacks simply missed because his opponent had dodged.

Yes, Connor was dodging his attacks even while being in the midst of conjuring a powerful spell. Immediately, the audience was sent into a frenzy as they couldn't believe what they just saw with their own eyes.

The same went for Simon and the guild leaders of the top five guilds. Karina Lowell, the guild leader of the Magician's guild even got up from her seat.

"[Concurrent Chant]" her cherry red lips silently uttered.

"To think that there would be one other person other than you and that lass from the Magician's guild, it seems that this old one had underestimated this kingdom too much" Vouves said with a smile.

The pretty lady seated to his right, gazed at the battle occurring on the stage with interest.

"Eh?! Gramps, are you trying to say that this guy is as powerful as Alice?" Denzel asked in doubt.

"What do you think? That young man right there has mastered one of the Rare Superior Skill just like your sister. Although from his crude way of using it, it could be seen that it hasn't been long since he learned it and is putting it to work somehow" Vouves answered it for him.

On another corner of the audience stands, Simon stood rooted in his seat, his eyes widened with surprise. [Concurrent Chant] a rare Superior skill that had the potential to reach the legendary tier was one of the skills that Irene had told him to master before he reached level 500 and went through a rank up.

The skill allows a person to do multiple things at once just like the parallel thought processing skill which allowed a person to process multiple thought at once. Well, the concept was similar, just in this case, one can do something else physically even while they were already busy with a task at hand.

If one acquired the [Concurrent Chant] skill, they would be able to conjure a powerful magic and would still be able to move or do something else in the meantime. Something that normally would not be possible without the skill.

Irene's Advanced tier Permafrost magic was the prime example. Even while conjuring an advance magic, she was capable of moving and performing other tasks all at the same time leading her enemies by the nose.

Though the skill she had was much more evolved and cannot be compared with the one shown by that participant from the Crimson demolition guild, it was still something that was derived from it.

"[Concurrent Chant] huh" Simon iterated, his gaze plastered on the battle that was currently occurring.

Storms of blade shadows flew towards Connor and targeted him from every direction, some missed, while some barely managed to scratch him. Even though suffering a minor scratch from these blade shadows which contained a powerful corrosive energy similar to the dark attribute of mana would be extremely painful, Connor held onto it by gritting his teeth.

With every passing time, the mana around the surrounding raged even more. By now, even the most stupid of the audience could tell that Connor was upto to something.

Alarm bell started ringing in their heads and if not for the fact that Cyrus had told them that the barrier erected around the stage to protect them is even capable of withstanding an attack from a person above level 500, they would have already started panicking and running for their lives.

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Members from the Crimson demolition guild wore pensive looks as they gazed at the stage.

"Keep enduring Connor, that sword and that shield must consume an incredible amount of mana from their user, as long as you can hold on, you can end it with your own magic. Do not let someone who completely relies on secondary items to strengthen themselves beat you" the guild master of the crimson demolition guild thought inwardly.

After seeing the medium-range attacks from his sword is unable to disrupt his opponent, Ivan stopped swinging his sword randomly. The mana consumed by the sword to release that kind of energy was truly huge, even if he was level 400, that kind of consumption was still too much for him.

"You do know the consequences if you lose right" he remembered a memory before coming to the kingdom of Ellesmere.

"Do what you have to, but you must win the reward. If you cannot accomplish it, there is no need for you to come back".

Ivan grit his teeth, why of all times did he have to remember that conversation right now.

RUMBLE... the air was starting to distort and the surrounding mana was going berserk. The temperature around the stage was rising up and the area was dyed in a crimson hue.

Looking at Connor who was in the middle of all this, a never before seen seriousness replaced his previous goofy expression.

"Amalgamation Magic Flame Wind Mastery- [Rapid Bullet Storm]".

The moment his magic neared completion, fierce wind carrying along an intense heat started generating around the stage and quickly dried all the moisture around from this place.

Hundreds of fireballs the size of an egg materialised in the sky above the stage and was swept away by the wind further increasing the speed and rotation of the fire bullets. The wind picked on speed and quickly covered the whole stage before narrowing down on Ivan leaving him no place to dodge.

It encased him in the centre and stormed him with flame bullets everywhere.

,m BOOM... BOOOM.. BOOM... like a drum, sounds of continuous explosion rang out from within the storm which kept on getting stronger and faster with time.

Unlike the intermediate tier [Flame Bullet Barrage] magic, the [Rapid Bullet Storm] this time was the culmination of flame and wind magic and also the most strongest magic that Connor was currently capable off.

The magic not only increased the speed and deadliness of his already powerful flame bullet, but as the time goes on, each bullet dodged would gain even more power and speed.

Simon arched his brows seeing this spectacle of a magic being created in front of him. This fellow from the crimson demolition guild had used the amalgamation magic of flame and wind in such a way that his flame magic was being complemented by his wind magic.

The magic borne this way made his flame bullets have even more firepower and was far more deadlier than simply mixing the two elements to create a flame storm.

The audience was struck with awe as they witnessed the most powerful spell of a level 391 participant from one of the top five guilds, the Crimson demolition guild.

"As expected from a member of the Crimson demolition guild, their fire magic is indeed top tier in our kingdom"

"Yeah, I would have nightmares if I was the one being targeted by that attack. Seems like the participant from the kingdom of blackthorn had drawn the short end of the stick this time" the crowd gossiped, even from this distance they could feel the might and power of the attack.

They had no doubts in their mind that after that attack even if the participant from the kingdom of blackthorn was defeated, he would be rendered unable to battle.

WHOSH...WHOOSH...

Ivan hurriedly dodged the incoming flame bullets by manoeuvring his body in every way he could and blocked those that he couldn't with his shield. The corrosive energy released by his shield, was able to block the bullets initially but as the time passed and the storm got narrower, the angle, power and speed of the bullets got trickier and faster.

Added with the fact that he did not have room to move his body around, some of the bullets managed to hit. Each of these flame bullets after being encased in the storm and being swept around, got much more powerful.

Fortunately, as the prince of the kingdom of blackthorn, the quality of the armour that he wore wasn't low, it was made of blackgold ore and was quite expensive. However, after being bombarded by hundreds of flame bullets repeatedly and in a quick succession, even the armour was giving out.

BANG... CRACK... the force of one of the bullets hitting him on the back was so powerful that Ivan fell face-first on the ground, his armour cracked. Now that he was immobilised, the rest of the bullets hailed down on him dying his body red.

"You do know the consequences if you lose right" those words from his memory for some reason kept on repeating itself at this moment making him even more furious.

"Like hell I will lose... HAAAAHHHH" Giving a spirited shout, Ivan activated one skill after another.

[Super Enhanced Strength], [Super Enhanced Endurance], [Super Enhanced Defense] [Berserk]. An unimaginable amount of power flowed inside his body, his frame expanded and he became more wider and bulkier.

"[Battle Fury]" roaring out the name of one of his class-specific skill, he brandished his sword in a wide arc. All that energy was channelled into the sword and a blade shadow so huge and powerful that it was incomparable to the earlier attacks, manifested.

RIIIIPPP

The moment the huge black blade shadow came in contact with the storm encasing him all around, a ripping sound like that of a paper being ripped, sounded out. And in front of the astonished eyes of

all the audience, the powerful magic was torn apart before being swallowed by the black corrosive energy.

A hideous figure covered in blood and broken armour, surfaced from inside the stone. He looked so different than before that the crowd had difficulty identifying who he was.

After scattering the pesky storm of flame bullets, Ivan's eyes shifted towards Connor who was puking out blood from the repercussions of his magic being destroyed and had a stunned expression masked all over his face.

Without missing this opportunity when his opponent was in a daze, Ivan rushed towards the gap between them in a few seconds. Due to intuition or from his experience, Connor's body jolted awake the moment he felt his opponent's presence near him.

However, it was already too late, before he even realised Ivan was already upon him, charging at him with his shield raised high.

"[Brutal Charge]" a class specific skill of [Tainted Knight] which allows them to channel all their energy in charge and shift all that energy towards the shield right at the moment of impact.

BANG... a berserk force hit Connor right in the chest breaking a few of his ribs and like a ball, sent him flying towards the barrier.

BAM... the momentum with which his body collided with the barrier was powerful enough to create ripples in it. After rebounding back against the barrier, his body fell limply to the corner of the stage.

The members of the Crimson Demolition guild, all stood up seeing Connor get hit by an attack like that when his defence was the weakest. They all knew in their minds that after suffering such a blow, getting back up would be a miracle.

"You did your best, your last attack was praiseworthy. Go and bring him back, make sure he receives proper treatment" the guild master of the crimson demolition guild closed his eyes and commented silently.

It was as he had said, Connor had lost consciousness and Ivan was declared the winner. Seeing his opponent being taken by his guildmates, Ivan mumbled in a voice that only he could hear.

"Yeah, I felt your emotions from your magic loud and clear. Weapons and artifacts cannot always measure the true prowess of a person. But I cannot lose here, I have my own circumstances for using them". He silently disappeared in a corner after saying that.

"Winning 3 out of his three battles and showcasing his might to everyone, Ivan Mavis Blackthorn moves onto the top ten" Cyrus declared in a booming voice.

With eight of the top ten spots for the final day of the tournament taken, the remaining participants started battling even more fervently. However, their match lacked a little zing after the previous match and most of them also had a defeat in their score.

Win three out of three matches, that was the condition to grab one of the top ten spots. The participants that currently had 2 out of 2 wins in their score, were only a handful few and out of them, there were two participants who the audience knew were sure to move up and grab the top ten spots.

That is if they do not come across each other. Fortunately for their guilds, their opponents had been decided.

The first to take the last two remaining spots with his three victories was...

"Park Garrett from Sea God's Trident guild moves to the final day of the tournament after achieving his splendid three victories".

The audience cheered loudly when the name of the participant from one of the top five guilds came up. Marcus, Hallie and Tyler each participant from their respective top five guilds had secured a top ten spot for themselves, the ones who were still yet to move up, were Sea god's trident and assassin's guild.

Park Garrett with his victory took one spot and brought his guild to the final day of the tournament proving that Godwin isn't the only genius they had in their guild.

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"That was quite the splendid match indeed. That young man if I dare say, will be the next star for their Sea God's Trident"

"Truly, after the Connor—Vs—Ivan match, I didn't think that there would any more enthralling match for the day, but it seems that I was wrong. If I was the guild master of the Sea god's trident, I would nurture that young man to be the pillar of the guild".

Talks like that, was going around everywhere. The audience was filled with hubbub after the match.

"Park Garrett... Sea God's trident. They are a guild that cannot be underestimated. That fellow, although he made it seem like he achieved a victory after a difficult battle, I can see that he is hiding much of his strength".

"To create a setting like that while in between his battle, he must have an insane control over his mana and skills. Having raised someone like him, it's no wonder their guild is the head of the top five guilds" Simon acknowledged.

Park Garrett on the stage was one thing, but he was also curious about the person named Godwin, the crowd was comparing with Denzel.

That boy by far was the most dazzling and talented human that Simon had met in his opinion. For the crowd to be comparing the two of them, it was natural that he was curious. After the stage was repaired by a mage capable of using intermediate tier tremor magic, the next set of battles continued on.

"The next participants will decide who will be the one to grab the last of the top ten spots. Each of them have two victories in their score and have gone through one tough battle after another to reach this place. Participant Gallio Stallard from the Assassin's guild—Vs—Lucas Blackwood from Castledor City".

The spectators cheered in welcome of the participants, they all had their eyes on the one wearing a normal looking leather armour and carrying two short swords. He was someone from the top five guild, his mere presence attracted eyes from all around.

In contrast, Simon was more interested in observing Lucas who he was somewhat acquainted with during his trip from Castledor city to here in the Air Engine. Even though he had said acquainted, the both of them had only exchanged a few words.

Simon was curious to see what the youngest branch manager of the adventurer's association was capable of.



After the two participants got on the stage, they exchanged a few words of greeting.

"I didn't think that the Castledor city from the remote north-western region, would be able to produce someone like you. Nevertheless, it seems your luck ends here for you to end up being my opponent" Gallio Stallard said measuring his opponent.

Lucas on the other hand, did not comment much and only narrowed his brows. He knew that the participants from the top five guilds would be arrogant; however, he didn't think that they would be this overconfident.

Perhaps in his opponents eyes, he didn't even see Lucas as his opponent. Lucas was a level 400 [Pyroblitz Magus] with a high potential. Compared to that, his opponent Gallio Stallard was level 397 with a rare class and a high potential just like him.

Though he was a few levels above his opponent, if one factored their age then the same cannot be said any longer. Plus, one cannot judge a participant from the top five guilds simply based on their levels.

Lucas bent his head and looked at the audience stands where the royal family was seated. There in one of the seats, sitting prettily was Cynthia whose appearance was enough to beguile the crowd.

The princess of the Ellesmere kingdom, the first time he laid his eyes on her when he came to the capital for the first time, he was instantly smitten. He knew the vast status quo between them and his one-sided infatuation for her.

Thus he worked hard to get where he was right now and earned her recognition. During their trip to the capital city, he was fortunate enough to travel and familiarise himself with her. And now he was here participating in the 'Battle of the Finest' tournament where she can clearly see him.

"I'll show you the results of my years of hard work" Lucas silently mumbled.

The moment the referee started the battle, a fierce clash that blew away the crowd's preconception of the top five guilds, began. After an arduous long battle where the barrier was rocked again and again and where the stage was completely destroyed, the final results that shocked the spectators came out.

The one to remain standing even while looking haggard and tattered was Lucas Blackwood from the Castledor city while his opponent was knocked out cold. The entire coliseum was silent for a while and only woke up when the referee declared the winner.

"Lucas Blackwood from the castledor city with his powerful performance defeated Galliio Stallard and earned the last spot for the top ten. With that, the top ten participants for the final day had been chosen".

The crowd was set into an uproar; this was the first time in history that amongst the participants who had moved up to the final day of the tournament, one of the top five guilds was missing.

Lucas Blackwood managed to create an upset and defeated the participant from the Assassin's guild who was one of the favoured candidates for the top ten spots. With the defeat of Galliio Stallard, the Assassin's guild also failed to get into the top ten, something that had never occurred before.

It was a common pattern, immutable even that the top five guilds always entered the final stage. However, that custom has been broken today and had been achieved by none other a participant from the remote north-western corner of a region.

By defeating a star participant of one of the top five guilds, he had proven his skills and qualification to rightfully be in the top ten. The audience was reeling in shock but the ones more shocked than them were the members of the assassin's guild who did not expect such an outcome.

"Sigh... it was unexpected that there was still such a rough diamond hidden within the participants. Go and bring Galliio back, he has done a good job coming this far".

The guild master of the Assassin's guild did not look too upset or mortified by the result and simply accepted the fact as it is.

"But guild master the top ten spot..." before the member could say any further, he shut his mouth feeling the sharp glare of his guild master.

The fourth day battles have concluded with numerous surprises and epic battles where the top fifty participants fought nail and tooth against each other.

The audience that had come to see today's battles, left satisfied. The events that they have witnessed would be passed onto with their mouths and circulate across the whole kingdom.

Simon exited the coliseum; on his way out, he unwittingly bumped into someone. Since it was his fault for being lost in his thoughts, he felt it appropriate to apologise to the other party; however, when he turned around, they were nowhere to be seen.

Befuddled, he scratched his hair "Strange, why do I feel a sense of incongruity from that person?". Shaking his head off the thought, he left the scene.

Simon was lying on top of his bed after coming back to the inn. His eyes were closed and he was in deep contemplation. The battles that had been fought today, was something that was very instructive and gave Simon a far clear image of what humans with their class system were capable off.

Their battle strategies and how they used their skills to counter each other. Simon was currently going through a simulated battle with each of the participants in his mind based on what he had witnessed today.

It would be a lie if he said that he wasn't interested in some of the class-specific skills that they had, like the roar skill that participant from the savannah beast guild had or the Rare Superior skill [Concurrent Chant] Irene had told him about.

There were also battles that told others that one shouldn't just overly rely on their weapons and artifacts to become strong. At the end, they are just secondary items that augment your powers and not the real representation of your strength.

Simon got up from his bed and sighed, his body was itching to fight all those geniuses of this kingdom. Fighting them in a simulated battle in his mind was different than actually facing them. Only when one goes through numerous difficult battles, was when one truly grows stronger.

Simon who knew the way to become stronger, couldn't help having his blood boil after seeing so many strong opponents. The battle of the Finest standing up to its name truly brought only the best ones onto the stage.

As Simon was having these thoughts, Adalinda's voice sounded inside his head once again.

"Hey did you miss me? Hehe, my disciple and I are coming to the capital. Wait for us tomorrow.". Just as always she ended the transmission right after saying her piece.

Simon frowned, from her words he could interpret that they were still far from the capital.

"How far did she run?" he thought internally. For Adalinda who could cut space and travels dozens of kilometres at once to be travelling for more than three days to get back? Simon could only wonder.

Shaking his head off the unnecessary thought, he got out of the inn to go roaming around the city.

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Northern part of the city, many luxurious mansions lined up around this corner. The place was used to hold and receive the foreign delegates and was only a few kilometres away from the coliseum. The security around here was extremely tight with many high level knights and soldiers patrolling the area from time to time.

Inside one of the rooms of said mansions.

"Hehe, this is starting to become more fun. Sadly, I have some other place to be so I won't be able to witness it" a being whose appearance gave others a chill, and whose aura was so fiendish that they could cower anyone with just their glare, said.

The being had a wicked smile plastered on his face, Crimson eyes and pale white skin. The being was none other than Avrox.

"Hehe, [Imitate Presence] release. With that I wonder how long you can stay hidden Demon Viscount. Hmm? So that old man has noticed huh. Let us meet again if you are still alive by then".

Right after saying that, he took out a [Scroll of return] and quickly started conjuring the spell. A pool of blood could be seen behind him.

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Simon returned to the inn after having a satisfying dinner and was just about to lie down on his bed when suddenly, he felt a presence outside his door. Immediately, he became alerted and prepared his body to act at a moment's notice.

The presence that had approached his door, was unknown to him.

"Who goes there?" Simon asked, since the person decided to reveal their presence, there must be some reason for it.

Indeed, it was as he had guessed. The moment he asked the question, the person behind the door spoke at a volume that only they could hear.

"I come on behalf of lady Cynthia. She has tasked me with relaying you a message".

Cynthia? As Simon wondered what message did she want to give him this late at night, the message that he got, befuddled him.

"Lady Cynthia told me to tell you to be careful and leave the capital as soon as you can. That is all". Right after relaying his message, the person disappeared just like they appeared.

[Stealth], Simon immediately recognised the skill the other party used. However, his mind right now was caught up in something else.

"What did she mean by those words? Be careful and leave the capital?" since she did not provide any context or anything else to explain what she meant by those words, it was difficult for Simon to understand what she meant.

Cynthia didn't strike him as someone who would joke like that, which could only mean that something had happened and she was trying to warn him off.

His relationship with her could be said as cordial which explained her trying to do something like that. Plus Simon had also saved the life of her guard commander/friend and had also sold those elixirs of his to her in time of need.

As much as he appreciated this kind gesture from her, he had his own reason for staying in the capital. It wasn't though he had completely ignored her warnings, he did stay on his guard the whole night and was more cautious than before.

The night of the fourth day of the tournament was particularly noisier than it was the previous other nights further enforcing the fact that something had happened. He could hear the footsteps of the soldiers running everywhere all night.

When the morning of the next day came, the commotion of the people was more apparent. Today was the final day of the Battle of the Finest which will decide who will be the winner of this year's tournament.

The top ten participants contesting in it were the finest of the finest and the battle were sure to be extremely exhilarating.

As Simon walked down the street towards the Coliseum, he noticed that knights and soldiers were stationed everywhere and were on high alert. Even the soldiers near the entry of the coliseum were extremely careful when allowing people in.

Nobody was allowed to wear any mask or cover their appearance, those who did not comply were directly apprehended. Everybody could feel the tension in the air and that something was different today.

Simon who used the VIP entry pass to enter the coliseum, heard bits and pieces of information from the people walking in front of him.

"Why the hell is there such a tight security today? Even if it's the final day of the tournament these many soldiers are clearly too much"

"Did you know my relatives who came today all the way from the other cities to watch the final day of the tournament, weren't allowed inside the capital? The soldiers have barricaded all the entry and exit points of the city. Everywhere around the walls, you can see soldiers stationed"

"What? Is that all true?"

Simon knitted his brows in consternation, something really did happen. However, the general populace had no idea.

'So whatever it was, it was kept a tight secret huh' he thought internally. To be barricading all the entry and exit points and to station guards everywhere, Simon couldn't help but have a foreboding feeling.

The seats inside the coliseum was packed with people who were similarly talking about the unusual activities of the soldiers. Looking around, Simon noticed that other than the royal family, top five guilds and all the other factions were present.

No, it would be wrong to say that it was only the royal family, the delegates from the Sanguine Empire were also absent. Usually, the tournament would have started right after the dawn break; however, for some reason, it was being delayed today.

Simon wasn't the only one who had some inkling that something was going on, the guild leaders of the top five guilds who had their own information network, were furrowing their brows in contemplation.

"Hmm? Isn't that guy..." when Simon was observing them, Simon noticed a familiar face seated beside the guild leader of Sea God's Trident.

The person which looked familiar was none other than Scott Green who he had met in the city of Mountmend. It was also the latter who told him about the Battle of the Finest tournament in the capital.

After an hour-long wait or so, the royal family of Ellesmere along with their guardian beast Fierce Warhawk descended onto the stage of the coliseum. What surprised the audience was that the Warhawk was not only carrying the royal family, but also the officer from the adventurer's association Davis Hall and the delegates of the Sanguine Empire.

'What was going on?' the entire crowd had the same question as they continuously murmured.

After these people got on the stage, they discussed among themselves for a minute or two before Cyrus as the moderator for this event step forward and declared.

"Everyone, we are extremely sorry for delaying the final round of the tournament; however, something extremely important has occurred and until we address this issue, we cannot move on to today's finale. I hope everybody understands and cooperates with us".

The crowd silently listened, this sudden change in situation piqued their interest. they were all dying to know what the Royal Knight captain meant by those words.

"I am ashamed and devastated to say that some of our top ten participants were attacked yesterday".

The moment Cyrus said that, the audience erupted in a loud clamour. It wasn't unusual for the participants to be attacked or targeted by some factions they have had grudges with, but such happenstance only occurred after the tournament when all the participants left the capital.

No matter who it was, nobody dared to do something like that inside the capital, after all, doing so would be slighting the authority of the royal family. Due to the royal family intervening and the soldiers maintaining the law there was never a case of a participant being attacked so openly in the capital.

Though that was only the case as long as they were inside the capital. Once they were out, the royal family did not bother with the personal affairs of the different factions. Because of this, the fact that somebody was attacked inside the capital came as a huge shock to the audience. They couldn't help but wonder who that insane person was to do something like this.

Cyrus locked his brows and seemed a little angry as he said "Unfortunately, participant Ivan from the blackthorn kingdom was injured but the assailant had already left the scene when our soldiers were alerted. Even our third prince was targeted by the very same assailant. Thankfully, the prince wasn't injured that badly and was swiftly healed by our [Priests]".

The crowd was thrown aback, they didn't expect the assailant to go after a delegate from the foreign nation and even their third prince.

The perceptive ones were even more alarmed, a foreign prince being attacked and harmed was no joke. Depending on the situation, this might even become a political issue for a war between their two nations.

Had the assailant gone mad to do something like that? Not to mention hurting the third prince meant that they would have a less chance of winning this tournament against the Sanguine Empire.

"Who is it that dares to commit such a crime within the confines of our capital Cyrus?" Brutus Sarge, the guild leader of the Savannah Beast asked.

Touching a participant inside the capital while they were still there, meant that the assailant was also making light of them, the top five guilds.



Brutus' emotions were shared by all the other guild leaders of the top five guilds and they all had a look that said they were all dying to know who was this intrepid soul that did not fear them.

Fortunately for them, the next set of words that Cyrus said, basically guaranteed that they had found the assailant.

"The assailant that attacked the third prince and participant Ivan had used some peculiar means to evade all the securities and measures we placed for the safety of the participants. However, they forgot that a ranker above level 700 was currently residing in our capital. With their help, we were able to identify who that assailant was" Cyrus declared in a serious tone.

"Sir Vouves, Lord Davis if you will please" King Henry requested to the two people beside him.

Vouves and Davis nodded their head before stepping forward. "I didn't think that a member of their race would become so active despite our presence" Vouves sighed.

"Hmph, they were never a clever bunch and only know how to hide like that. Now that it has come to this, it matters not why it is here, we can first bring it down before questioning it later" Davis said taking out his staff.

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"Alright" Vouves nodded.

BADUMP...

Simon felt his heart suddenly pound, from the moment they started announcing about how some participants were attacked last night, he was getting a bad feeling. His intuition had become extremely acute and his senses alert, he knew that something was very wrong but didn't know what.

And as if to answer his queries, the old man with a head full of white hair tied into a dreadlock declared who that person or rather the being was.

"Yesterday this old man was alerted of a sudden presence of a foreign race. When this old man arrived at the scene, I found young participant Ivan and prince Erwin injured. The assailant may have fled the scene but he had left a crucial clue, their presence".

"Together with Davis Hall from the Adventurer's association, we have concluded that the presence was none other than of a Demon Noble".

The moment those last few words sounded out, the whole crowd had become silent. The words Demon Noble wasn't something that they get to hear everyday not to mention many of them had not even seen one their whole life.

It came as a huge surprise for them that a member of a Demon race was here and they were also the one who attacked their third prince and a participant from the blackthorn kingdom.

Simon sat silently on his seat, his heat growing colder by the second. He now knew where the feeling of foreboding came from and why Cynthia sent a message telling him to get away from the capital yesterday.

p Something was very wrong here and he could feel himself getting tangled into something that he had no control of. It was as if he had already fallen into a trap the moment he had decided to stay in the capital.

Simon looked at the people on the stage and noticed that Cynthia was not present amongst them. Why did she sent such message to him? Was she aware of his identity? If so then didn't it mean that his ruse had been seen through? Thoughts like a flood bombarded his mind.

Strangely enough though, he didn't panic even though he knew his situation would only get worse from here. He who had gone through numerous life and death battle in the ghastly winding forest found his mind and heart growing calm.

After that declaration from Vouves, the crowd started getting agitated, it was only to be expected, after all, there was just too much bad blood in the history of the two races.

"I want everyone to calm down and listen to what the royal knight captain has to say" Davis Hall said, the man was an officer of headquarters of the adventurer's association and naturally exuded an aura that made the crowd silent.

Cyrus Skyler made a complex face and admitted in front of the whole crowd.

"A few days ago before the Battle of the finest tournament started, we felt a breach in our city protection array and found out that it was made by a Demon Noble. We put our every effort into

finding them but it was as if they had disappeared into thin air in broad daylight with no information to be found about them until yesterday. I apologise to everyone for keeping this a secret; however, I had no choice".

This was a blunder of the royal family, but the man was taking all of the blame on his own shoulders. He was trying to save the reputation of the royal family by being the bad guy.

Henry sighed, he was just about to stop his royal knight from ruining his reputation permanently when a derisive voice that contained some contempt rang out.

"Haha, so what the royal knight captain is trying to say is that the soldiers of this kingdom are incompetent and useless enough to be unable to find a single intruder in their own city?".

Everybody looked on with anger in their eyes at the owner of the voice. If it was some other person, he would have immediately been crucified or thrown into a prison; however, the identity of the speaker was a little special.

Oman ridiculed, but that was just on the outside. Internally, he was panicking thinking that the Demon Earl was caught. He couldn't be blamed for thinking so after all, there were currently two people above level 700 in this city.

If they were to investigate the demon and if he spilled their connection, it would spell doom for his kingdom

At another corner of the audience seat, Scott Green narrowed his eyes and seemed to be in deep thought, nobody knew what he was thinking.

Cyrus did not get mad at this slight of a comment, on the contrary, he nodded his head and declared in an unwavering voice in front of the crowd.

"It is true that the fault lies with this city's soldiers. That is why allow me on behalf of all the soldier to amend for this mistake and erase it forever".

His intention was clear, he had basically declared that he would be fighting that Demon noble. Cyrus Skyler was someone whose reputation was only preceded by Godwin, even the guild leaders of the top five guild respected him.

It came as no surprise that the people were awed by his declaration.

"A noble aspiration; however, leave it to us old fellows. We cannot allow it to think that it can do whatever it wants in the central continent. If it thinks that it can just hide amidst the humans then let us teach him a lesson"

Davis looked at Cyrus and declared. He then glanced at Vouves beside him "I might need your help old friend".

After saying that, their two bodies started floating mysteriously and before long they were standing at the middle of the sky high above the coliseum. The crowd curiously looked up from their seats, wondering what the two were planning to do.

If the demon noble had indeed hidden himself amidst the humans, it would be very hard to find it unless they have something that would reveal his position to them.

Davis Hall, tightly held his staff that was made from an ancient treants body and swiped it towards the sky a few times. Immediately, a vast amount of mana, deep and powerful was released from his body and in an instant covered the sky.

The weather started changing and so was the mana in the surrounding which was starting to coalesce in the sky above the coliseum. Wild winds were generated and in front of many astonished eyes, a highly complex multi-layered magic circle that covered one-third area of the city was formed.

The sky suddenly darkened and thick clouds appeared out of nowhere.

"You are overstraining yourself again," Vouves remarked.

"Haa... haa.. shut up and help me complete this magic circle" Davis retorted.

The former shook his head and stretched out his old hands. With the motion of his hands, the multi-layered magic circle in the sky slowly started rotating and the runes in it started moving.

"You are going to use that skill aren't you?" Vouves asked to which he only got a small nod.

Davis started floating higher and higher until he could almost touch the enormous circle with just the stretch of his hands.

"Holy Magic Mastery... [Eye of Luminesce] [Gladius]".

At that moment, the resonant sound of a bell could be heard echoing out in every corner of the city. Every person no matter where they were or what they were doing, saw innumerable rays of light like a shower of rain fall down upon them.

The shower of light encompassed the entire city and was even able to pass through walls and fall on people underneath it.

They looked at the incredible sight and at themselves who were covered in light. The people inside the coliseum were the same, they each were bathed in a shower of light which calmed their minds and gave them a feeling of warmth.

However, that wasn't the same for everyone. Simon who was seated on his seat, cursed seeing this sight. He didn't expect the man to be so powerful as to create such a huge spell that encompassed the entire city.

Though that may be the case, that wasn't his problem right now. Unlike the others who were having a pleasant expression on their faces after being exposed to this light, Simon on the other hand was having a difficult time.

He felt like his body was being burned by boiling hot water and black smoke was coming out of him, making him stand out quite a lot.

"Hohh, I didn't expect it to be amongst us inside the coliseum. Well, it spared us the trouble of chasing after him" Davis said as they slowly descended.

By now, the entire attention of the crowd was on Simon whose body was continuously releasing a black smoke. Seeing this scene, some of the young members couldn't help but ask their guild masters what was happening.

"Light magic is considered the weakness or perhaps the bane of all the creatures that have a strong affinity to darkness. A demon noble is no exception. Holy magic is the intermediate tier of light magic and is even more effective on them. To us, it would cause no harm but for a Demon Noble, it was no different than having to suffer a baptism where their body is continuously burned"

Brutus Sarge said getting up from his seat. It was not only him, all those people in the coliseum that knew what the black smoke entailed, got up from their seats.

"That man?!" Scott green who was seated Benny Beckermann narrowed his eyes when it landed on Simon. But before he could ponder any further, the person beside him whispered something into his ears which made his expression extremely peculiar.

"Are you sure that he was the guy that knocked you out that day?".

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"He was one of them, I am sure of it" the person who said those words to Scott, was not wearing a mask but if he was, Simon would have immediately recognised him as the guy he had met back at the rundown shack of a restaurant.

"It's not Avrox? So there was another Demon Noble here?" Oman made an amused face and watched with interest as to what was going on.

"So you have been hiding amongst us all along? Hmph if nothing I praise your guts for not trying to run away already. Your cover is already blown, there is no point in putting with this façade. Vouves..." Davis asked.

"I know. [Disruption]" the royal court magician said invoking one of his skills that made the mana around the surroundings go into a frenzy.

The artefact trinket of Grimlock on Simon's neck started trembling and making unusual noise before going off. The effect that was keeping his appearance as a human dissipated off.

In front of everyone's stunned eyes, Simon's body turned taller, grew horns and became more muscular. The features exclusive to demon nobles appeared on his body.

"I-It's a Demon Noble..." nobody knew who said it first, but the moment someone shouted that, people started running away from Simon and in the blink of an eye, the area around him had become completely empty.

Simon's eyes were grave as he looked all around him, everywhere he saw, soldiers surrounded and blockaded the place. It wouldn't have been a problem if it was only those soldiers; however, the ones he was most alert of were the two old men hovering in front of him who released a vast ocean like aura just like the Ancient Titan Treant.

"There is no way for you to escape, give up willingly and come with us" Davis Hall said. His tone was condescending as he measured Simon. Even without his analysis just purely based on the aura that the Demon Noble was releasing, he could tell that the latter was not very strong.

"A Demon Viscount?".

p Vouves furrowed his brows, he could tell that something was wrong, the presence that he felt yesterday indeed matched the Demon Viscount in front of him. However, the aura he felt was far more pure than this.

As his thoughts reached till this point, from the corner of his eyes he saw Denzel looking somewhat unusual.

Give Up? There is nothing more stupid than doing something like that. Even while knowing the difference between him and his opponents, Simon did not willingly surrender because he knew that once he gets caught by them his situation would only be worse.

WHOOSH...

In front of everyone's astonished eyes, Simon unfurled his wide bat-like wings and rushed towards the sky with all his strength. The soldiers have blockaded every other exit point of this city leaving the sky the only path he can escape through.

However, the sky above the capital was a no flying zone for a reason, the hundreds of magic cannons placed on the city walls, would target and shoot down any flying object that tries to do so. Though Simon knew it, he had no other option but to take his chances.

The demon noble was flying away yet the two old men did not take any action and simply saw it happening from a distance. Everybody who was present inside the coliseum was astonished by their actions.

"Shall we do something father?" Marcus asked.

Brutus shook his head and simply told his son to watch. Amongst the two old men, one was a ranker renowned across this region while the other an officer of the headquarters of the Adventurer's Association.

There was no way they would allow a mere Demon Viscount to get away from this place in front of their presence.

Simon was careful of the magic cannons; however, he was more bothered by those old men who weren't trying to chase him for some reason. While thinking about that in the back of his head, he increased his speed even further. whatever it was, he must get away from this place as soon as possible.

Simon with the help of his skill [High-Speed Flight], quickly became a dot that was disappearing at the horizon.

Davis Hall who was watching all of that from the skies above the coliseum smiled at this moment and stepped forward. The moment he did, an invisible ripple passed through the air as if it was water and the figure of the man disappeared.

The next time he appeared, he was directly a few meters in front of Simon who was almost about to escape the confines of the city.

"Now now, if we allowed a single Demon Viscount to escape in front of our presence, will we still have any face left to show in public?" Davis stated, he stretched his fingers and pointed behind him.

"Well you can try passing through that place and see if you can escape or not for yourself".

Right after saying that Davis pulled his hands back and assumed a carefree posture but other than that, he did nothing else.

Simon glanced at the man, for some reason, the words that he said, was giving him a bad premonition. Nonetheless, he did not slow his speed and swiftly passed by the man.



Simon utilised all the strength in his body to increase his speed even further, he became a black shooting star cutting through the dome of blue sky. Just when he reached the edges of the city walls and was about to leave its confines, he knocked into something cold and solid.

BANG... the force from his flight, rebounded Simon back.

Hurriedly stabilising himself, he looked in front of him only to be surprised to see nothing there. Earlier when he crashed there, he definitely felt like there was something akin to a wall there.

Simon flew forward and stretched his hands only to realise that he was right. There indeed was a wall solid and sturdy to the touch and at the same time invisible to the eyes.

"The wall that you are touching is the holy barrier [Gladius]. Others might be able to pass through it as they wish; however, you the denizen of darkness aren't allowed to. The Holy barrier [Gladius] repels darkness and is one of the strongest magic against the dark attribute of mana".

"As long as you have an affinity to it, you will not be able to get past the barrier. Do you get it now? No matter what you do, from the start, it was already predetermined that you won't be able to escape" At some point, Davis Hall appeared behind him and leisurely explained.

Simon's eyes became grave as he heard the explanation of the other party. Was this the reason why the two old men did not bother to chase after him when he tried to escape through the sky?

In the first place, when did he cast this spell? Simon recalled that the man was casting the holy magic [Eye of Luminesce], there was no indication of any other magic. What was going on?

Davis hall glanced at the perplexed expression of the Demon viscount and smiled. He knew what the latter was thinking; he was indeed casting [Eye of Luminesce] but it didn't mean that it was the only magic he was casting.

The holy magic [Eye of Luminesce] was the magic that he was casting in front of everyone's eyes but simultaneously in the background, he was also casting the Holy barrier magic [Gladius]. Something which is only possible because of the skills [Multi-Cast] [Shadow Chanting] and a few other skills in the mix.

However, there was no need for him to tell that to the Demon Noble in front of him. It wasn't simply the difference between their levels, but also between their experience and skills. He who was above level 700, an existence like the demon viscount was no match for him.

BANG... BANG...

Simon did not simply give up, although he did not know when and how this barrier magic was evoked, he did not believe that he wouldn't be able to pass through it.

BANG...

Simon activated all of his augmenting skills and punched the invisible barrier real hard. Nevertheless, other than creating some small ripples, his attacks managed to do nothing.

Did he have no choice other than to give up willingly? Simon refused to believe that, he attacked the barrier with all of his might a few more times only to be rebounded back by the barrier every time.

"It seems that you really are a foolish demon. Did those self-centred superior ranking demon nobles teach you nothing?" Davis sighed at the sight of the Demon Viscount butting heads with his barrier.

A demon Viscount was a powerful demon noble capable of destroying cities on their own. They are usually the subordinates or one might say the hands or legs of high ranking Demon nobles who mostly sit inside the safety of their dungeons and show their faces very rarely.

From Davis's perspective, the latter looked like a subordinate of some high ranking Demon Noble who was the brain pulling the strings from the shadows.

As long as he captured the one in front of him, he could slowly squeeze all that information out of him.

Little did Davis know that Simon was a low ranking Demon Baron who was borne from the ample mana of this world who evolved to the rank of Demon Viscount. He was not a subordinate of some high ranking demon noble.

Though the cases of someone like that appearing are so rare that most people of the Central continent aren't even aware of it. Davis Hall couldn't be blamed for thinking so.

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While Davis was observing the demon viscount, he suddenly saw the latter becoming silent all of a sudden. Just when he thought that the demon had finally give up after recognising the immensity between their strengths, he saw the demon noble taking something out from his space.

It was a crimson blade so glaringly red that it was as if it was forged with blood. The moment it appeared the surrounding air started boiling as a golden halo was cast upon the case. This time, it was Davis's turn to be surprised, he did not expect the demon viscount to suddenly pull out a weapon of such a high tier.

With his perceptive eyes, he could easily tell that the weapon was out of the ordinary and he was further proven right when he used [Analysis] on it.

The skills and the buffs that the sword bestowed made it a peak [A] tier sword which was rare even in the mainland of the central continent.

Simon called out the crimson Blazing Flame Sword from his inventory and felt the drastic increase in his stats when holding onto it. Since the sword was too conspicuous and mostly because there was never a need to, he did not use it much.

It also had to do with its enormous consumption of mana before. However, now that he found himself backed into a wall, he cannot be bothered about such stuff. He fed the sword with a humongous amount of his mana and the sword roared out as if alive.

CHIIII... the sky was heated up and the space was starting to distort from the unimaginable heat the sword was releasing. Earlier all his attacks failed to do anything to the invisible holy barrier in front of him.

Now though, he was also holding the strongest weapon in his arsenal in his hands. Simon refused to believe that the barrier won't budge even after that.

"Infernal Magic Mastery..." he roared out. The sword responded to his command and became brighter and brighter until it turned completely golden.

"[Infernal Heatwave]"

ROOOARRR... a golden fire blazed out of the sword increasing the temperature to a threatening degree.

"Infernal Magic?" Vouves who was watching all of this from above the skies of the coliseum, narrowed his eyes at this moment. Even he was caught off guard by this sudden appearance of golden flames.

The commotion happening around the western skies of the city, gathered the attention of every people of the city. They could all see a golden flame, no a golden sun at the distance that evoked a deep fear in their souls.

Even from this distance, they could feel the heat which was scalding their skin.

Simon after activating the Infernal Magic mastery skill bestowed by the sword, used one of the infernal magic and slashed down at the barrier blocking his path. A crimson line would be left behind at the end of the trajectory of the blade which refused to die down even after a while.

KLINK...

The moment the blade of the sword met the barrier made of holy magic, a loud noise like that of a metal scraping against metal echoed out. The holy barrier [Galdius] rippled intensely showcasing the might of the Infernal Magic.

"HAAAAHH" Simon roared out, he exerted even more pressure and willed the golden fire to burn hotter than before.

Intense sparks generated and in front of the astonished eyes of Davis and the distant Vouves, a small tear started appearing in the barrier. The sword managed to cut the barrier and burn a small hole in it.

The hole became bigger and bigger but at the same time, the intensity of the flames was also reduced to tiny embers. Nonetheless, Simon's attacks finally had some effect. The sword managed to open up a hole just big enough for him to pass through.

He flapped his wings and was just about to escape through it when suddenly he heard the flapping of clothes. Davis Hall behind him finally donned a serious expression and pointed his palm at Simon.

CLANG... the huge multi-layered magic circle in the sky rotated a little and as per his commands sent forth a beam of light that slammed into the hole that was made by the Demon Noble. In the blink of an eye, the tear that Simon had made after much difficulty, was mended back.

Shock, perhaps that would be an understatement to what Simon was feeling at this moment. His eyes which finally saw some light at the end of the black tunnel, darkened once again.

"There will be no escaping for you demon" he heard the voice of the old man before a strong force powerful enough to crack some of his bones hit squarely in his chest and sent him flying back towards where he came from.

BOOOM... Simon crashed back in the coliseum like a meteor dropping on earth, creating a big crater in the process.

The ordinary audience were stunned silly when something came crashing on the stage with an insane speed. However the more perceptive immediately knew that it was the demon Noble who was sent flying back here.

Simon spat out a mouthful of blood, circulated his mana around his body and expelled the foreign energy rampaging inside him. That attack earlier, even though the person held back a lot, shaved out a marginal amount of his HP.

Willing his body, he flapped his wings and got out of the crater only to find that he was surrounded and back at the coliseum again. Everywhere he looked, he saw humans that were looking at him with hostile eyes.

Perhaps he made the wrong choice by coming; however, it was too late to regret.

The sky was blockaded just like all the other exit points in this city, there was no place for him to run. He could sense multiple strong presence locking onto his aura, needless to say they were the guild leaders of the top five guilds and the faction leaders from the other regions.

Suddenly, Simon felt a sense of déjà vu, the coliseum, the battle of life and death and the jeering audience.

Simon had seen the picture of the memories of the Shieldbearer, one of the two ancient warriors back at the forbidden trail. His current situation was quite similar to the two brothers who were forced to fight a battle of life and death.

But unlike the two powerful ancient warriors, he was far too weak and his opponents far more powerful than him. Even if he struggled, he didn't see any hope of escaping this place.

Then was his only option to give up?

Just as those appeared in his mind, Simon violently shook his head and rejected the notion. No matter what he cannot allow them to capture him. He who was alone before, now had people who depended and were waiting for him back at his dungeon.

So giving up was never an option from the start. Thus he could only struggle, struggle until the bitter end. Simon bought three vials of elixir and quickly gulped it down.

[Elixir of healing used X3].

He then looked at the sky above the coliseum where the two old men were currently standing on and reinvigorated his spirits. Clenching the crimson blade tightly in his hands, he looked defiantly at them.

"Those injuries healed faster than I thought, those elixirs he took must be Master grade or above. Honestly, first that [A] rank sword and then these elixirs. This demon noble is full of surprises" Davis Hall commented.

"Un, I'm starting to feel like this Demon Noble is no ordinary one. That artefact he was using to mask his appearance was also a very high-grade artefact" Vouves replied observing the demon.

"Hohh, a low ranking demon noble having such high-grade weapons and artefacts, even if he was a subordinate of superior ranking Demon, I cannot understand how he is in possession of these items. Well, it matters not since I will be squeezing all the information out of him when I take him back to the headquarters".

Davis smiled and started making some symbols with his hands. Accordingly, the gigantic magic circle in the sky started rotating and the complex runes in it crisscrossing.

"There is no way that you don't feel it, the humongous gap between our powers. I'm far more powerful than you. It will be much more easier if you just surrender and stop your futile struggles" Davis iterated.

The demon noble silently glared at the old man wearing a suit with its crimson eyes and finally opened his mouth. However, the words that it spoke, only seemed to incite them more.

"Right now indeed you are more powerful than me. But that power gap will not remain the same forever. I know someone far more powerful than you and me, the power level between us was similarly very vast. However, if one gives up hope before they even start trying they will never be able to reach that height, no struggle is ever futile".

Simon barked back, a powerful savage aura radiating out of him like a tsunami.

It was not only Davis and Vouves near him who were surprised, people like the guild masters of the top five guild and faction leaders from the various regions who were keeping an eye on the Demon Noble were also astonished.

Even in front of a huge mountain-like presence such as Sir Davis Hall and Sir Vouves, the willpower of the demon refused to crumble down.

"Such sophistry, it seems you are even eloquent with words. Allow me to witness then how you will bridge this gap" Davis remarked, stretched out his index finger and made a pressing motion.

Immediately, a loud sound of a bell was heard and a curtain of white light fell from the sky and on top of the Demon Viscount making him kneel on the ground.

Simon grit his teeth, his Crimson eyes blazing like fire.

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[Super Enhanced Strength], [Super Enhanced Magic], [Super Enhanced Agility]... all of his augmenting skills were activated at once and channelled into the infernal magic bestowed by his sword.

"You will not be swinging that sword once again" but before he could even dish out an attack, a white ray surpassing the speed of light, penetrated his left hand forcing him to drop the sword.

Davis Hall who had seen the might of his sword, swiftly knocked it out of his hands. The pressure on Simon increased fourfold and he couldn't help but crash into the ground headfirst.

The curtain of white light on top of putting extreme pressure on him was also gradually drained him of his energy. Simon tried reaching for the sword but it was knocked away by the latter who was looking at him with eyes of indifference.

Anger, humiliation, hatred, self-loathing, a wild influx of emotions raged inside Simon. The other party was so strong that he did not even have the strength to raise his head. In front of absolute power, every other trick was useless.

At this moment, he was once again reminded of words that Irene and Adalinda had said him once. In this world, only strength recognises strength. If you are weak, your fate will be controlled by someone else. Power reigns supreme, that is the law of this world.

Simon knew that there was another demon Noble other than him and they were the ones who had attacked the participants. However, since he was weak, he did not even have the right to prove his innocence.

Simon looked at all the indifferent eyes currently observing him from a distance. What did he expect coming to a human kingdom without having sufficient strength? He had no one to blame for this other than himself.

"Remember that feeling from before, try recalling it again" pressed face-first into the ground and unable to move an inch, Simon tried recalling the time when he activated the fragment of pride himself.

'Let your feelings flow, stop trying to restrain them instinctively' he allowed himself to be overwhelmed by them and just like that... [Pride has been activated].

Simon was able to activate the fragment of pride. The moment the fragment was activated, he felt the pressure on him lessen by a whole lot; however, it was still not enough for him to completely resist the curtain of light which was swiftly depleting his strength.



'[Ancestral Symbol Ignition]' since even activating the fragment of pride wasn't enough, Simon also activated the ancestral symbol. Igniting the ancestral symbol on top of activating all those augmenting skills would put a huge strain on his body and would leave him unable to battle after the duration ends.

Nonetheless, he had no leeway to think about what would happen later since his current situation was worse enough to force him to use any and all skills in his repertoire.

The moment the ancestral symbol ignition skill was activated, Simon felt his body heating up and every cell and muscle in his body started trembling. The tribal-like golden marking on his body that was covered by his clothes, started shining with a brilliant light and his powers rose to a whole new different realm.

The change was so drastic and extreme that Davis and Vovues who were the closest to him, couldn't believe what they saw.

BANG... crisscrossing cracks appeared all around the stage and for the first time the demon Noble stood straight without being forced to kiss the ground by the curtain of light.

The audience that were watching all of this from the gallery, exclaimed. They could feel a wild and arrogant energy burst forth from the demon.

Feeling this unusual energy, Vovues to his surprise felt a sudden sense of dread and couldn't help but narrow his eyes.

"This Demon Viscount is not ordinary. Let me help you suppress him... Tempest Magic Mastery-[Hand of Zephyrus]". As soon as Vovues thumped his staff in the air, an invisible ripple passed through the space and in front of many gobsmacked eyes, a huge green hand penetrated through the clouds and fiercely pressed down on the demon noble on the stage.

Wild winds generated across the whole coliseum or perhaps the whole district. Those that knew about the magic, widened their eyes and at the same time realised that the ranker and the court magician of the sanguine empire was finally serious.

"Gramps.." Denzel called out. At this moment, he had a complicated look in his eyes that seemed uncertain of what he should do.

Alice and Vovues who knew him the best, were surprised by his unusual behaviour; nonetheless, the latter did not stop his magic that kept pressing down on the demon.

In one corner of the coliseum where the members of the Sea God's trident guild were present. Benny Beckerman squinted his eyes in realisation after he heard the report from Scott Green. He turned towards the man beside him and confirmed.

"Is that true Eleven? Was that demon one of them who entered inside our base and used the coordinates?".

He kept his voice low enough so that other than the members of their guild, nobody else would be able to hear them.

"That is true my lord. That brat from the sanguine empire along with that demon were the ones who ambushed me at the exit point".

Eleven reported with a face filled with grievance. Because of them, he had to face such humiliation.

Benny Beckerman nodded his head before glancing back towards the demon.

"If what you said is true, then doesn't that mean that they have been to that place? Sigh... it's a pity that demon won't be able to escape the grasp of those two old monsters today or else I would have liked to capture him myself and torment every information out of him" he said with a tone of regret.

Other than that, he was also amazed by the fact that a member of the Sanguine empire and a prince no less, was involved with a demon.

"Find out everything you can about that demon. I want to know how he entered the capital and if he has any accomplices inside" He ordered.

Scott nodded his head before adding "About that, I think I have met the demon when he was masquerading as a human back in the city of Mountmend...".

"I cannot believe that young man was a demon noble? He was right under our nose and we could even recognise him" Duke Montford stated angered that he had been taken advantage of by a demon.

"It's not your fault your grace, that demon must have used an artefact to deceive all of us. He must have also used something to fool the princes or else how could he become her escort".

Lucas said, internally though he was smiling gleefully knowing that after today he wouldn't have to worry about the princess developing any feelings for the other party during their month-long travel.

BAMMM... with a loud crashing noise, Simon who got back on his feet, was slammed deeper inside the stage once again. The huge hand made of berserk wind, made hundreds of cuts on his body until blood leaked out of those cuts.

"Hmm? He doesn't have a demon core. Don't tell me..." Vovues noticed that the Demon did not have the core on his chest and couldn't help but comment.

"What?!" Davis was similarly surprised by those words of Vovues and observed the demon carefully. Seeing that the other party indeed did not have a demon core, a peculiar glint flashed inside his eyes.

Low ranking demons like a demon viscount usually did not make their own dungeons since it was easily conquerable and worked mostly under higher-ranking demons. It came as a surprise to Davis and Vovues to see a demon viscount foolish enough to create their own dungeon.

"What do you plan to do with him now?" Vovues asked, now that they know that the demon had created a dungeon, it changed everything.

Davis smiled, a never before seen glint on his eyes "We are not breaking the treaty if the demon came to us himself. Now I have all the more reason to take him back to the headquarters".

Vovues nodded but did not comment further. There was no pity in his eyes even while knowing what future awaited the demon.

ROOAARRR... Simon roared in frustration, even after activating the pride fragment, [Ancestral Symbol Ignition] and every skill he has, he was still not able to resist the pressure from the two people in front of him.

Cracking sounds repeatedly came from his body as every bone in his body was being cracked by the pressure he was under. Since the two in front of him did not bother to keep their voice quiet, Simon was clearly able to hear what they were discussing.

However, at the same time due to being under the effects of the fragment, all emotions other than pride was suppressed. Now that it had come to this point, he did not care what method he had to use to get away from here.

Simon opened his inventory and his eyes went towards one of the items, a peculiar black hexagonal rock was sitting in one of the slots. The black hexagonal rock was none other than the Return Transit Rock that he got from the treasury after clearing the third trial.

According to Lucine, if he used the item again, he would be able to return to the forbidden trial grounds. This item currently was one of the things that could currently help him in his predicament.

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The reason for him not using it yet was because Simon knew how dangerous the trail ground was and he wasn't sure that he would be able to clear it by himself. However, now that he was pushed to the edge, it would be foolish not to use it.

Other than the return transit rock, his eyes also went towards the golden guardian stones and the Philosopher's stone. Irene had stored a powerful magic inside the philosopher's stone. Simon had no doubt that he would be able to change the situation if he used them and using the return transit rock, he would be able to escape this predicament.

Simon glared at the two old men with his crimson eyes, just as he was about to use the items, a familiar voice rang inside his head unexpectedly.

Vouves had a bad premonition seeing the demon noble glare at them so defiantly even at this point. And so he pressed Davis beside him to stop playing and knock the demon out. Holy magic was the best magic to use against a Demon noble after all.

"Haha, Vouves it seems that your age has caught up with you. The Demon is completely immobilised and cannot do anything other than glare at us. But since you are insisting so much, let's end this".

Davis said, his eyes suddenly turned white and with the gesture of his hand, the huge magic circle in the sky started turning once again.

"[Holy Dissension]" along with those words, a clear noise of the bell rang out.

<strong> DING...</strong> the sound of bell was so loud that it could be heard from every corner of the city. A huge curtain of light started descending down from the sky and top of the coliseum.

The curtain of light was packed with so much power that all those that were watching it knew that once this dropped on the Demon Noble, everything would be over.

Bringing along a palpable pressure, the curtain of light soon arrived in front of the coliseum. However, what surprised everyone was that in front of its certain doom, the demon noble seemed unafraid and was even smiling.

Just as the huge curtain of light was about to engulf him, something completely out of ordinary and beyond someone's comprehension happened.

The dozens of meters of space around the demon suddenly shattered like a glass and a void appeared in front of every astonished eyes watching from the distance.

The instant the void appeared, the sky turned dark as if it was the time of night.

Swiftly, the void devoured the descending curtain of light and disappeared right after as if it was never there in the first place.

The space mended itself and the sky was back to normal. However, the demon that should be knocked out by that curtain of light, was standing there completely unharmed, telling everyone that whatever happened a few seconds ago was not their imagination.

The incredulity of the situation was so bizarre that they couldn't help but doubt their eyes.

"What actually happened father?" Marcus asked.

But just like him Brutus too was clueless as to what had transpired even when he watched the whole thing with his own eyes.

The other guild leaders of the top five guilds were similarly clueless too. But how could Davis and Vouves who were above level 700 be unaware of what was going on.

Immediately, the two of them looked up at the sky, fear was apparent in their eyes. Why would it not, the huge magic circle in the sky made by Davis with all of his power, was cleanly cut in half.

"May I ask who this esteemed person is? This matter is between our Adventurer's Association and that demon Viscount" Davis asked, his tone completely different from his usual haughty tone.

With his words, he was trying to ascertain the identity of the one who just broke his attack and at the same time remind them of his background, the colossal standing behind him.

It was only at this moment that the audience realised that something had occurred that warranted even the caution of the two giant-like presence. Moreover, from those words from Sir Davis an officer of the Adventurer's Association, they could tell that interference at the last moment, was from someone else.

Just as they were wondering where this person was, a presence abruptly appeared high above the skies of the coliseum.

"Hmph, you are not qualified to know this lady's name. You are still a fledgling if you think you can scare me by mentioning the adventurer's association. If you want to have a talk with this lady, go and bring over Vincent" a childish voice full of haughtiness rang out from the sky.

The moment the name 'Vincent' came out of her mouth, Davis Hall felt his whole body jolting and cold sweat running down his spine. This name was not something anybody could spout from their mouth and only a handful few people in this entire world knew this name.

Yet, the person who had just appeared, used the name so casually that even he didn't have the authority nor the guts to do so.

'Who exactly is this person?' Davis couldn't help but wonder.

Ten minutes before this whole thing started, high above the skies of the capital city of Ellesmere, a rift in the space suddenly appeared and two people could be seen suddenly teleporting there like ghosts.

"Master, please... I don't want to go home so soon. Can we please just roam around a little more; this world is just so much fun. There are lots of places to visit and things that I have never seen before. Even if I go back home now, there is nothing to do and it's boring there. Grandpa is too protective and never allows me to go out. You can understand right master? Please allow your disciple some more time to travel around this world".

A woman with pure white hair and whose beauty could out shadow even the prettiest things in the world, said as she pouted. Beside her was a girl whose age looked no more than fourteen-fifteen years old.

"Hmph, you have the audacity to request something of your master after running the moment you see me? Girl, do you think I'm so easy to take advantage of? No means no... No matter how many times you ask me, my answer will remain the same. Who knows what trickery you will use to run away from me this time? I am not taking any more chances and bringing you back with me".

"Ummn~... if only I sensed your presence sooner. It is all that dastardly demon's fault. See how I teach you a lesson for fooling me" Lucine mumbled.

"Hmm? Did you say anything? Anyways, since we are might as well watch this 'Battle of Finest' tournament or whatever they call it. Isn't this the reason why you were hanging around this part?" Adalina said trying to liven the mood of her desolate disciple.

"Really?! Thank you master. I always wondered how the humans conducted their tournaments, I will finally get to see it today" Lucine commented smiling brilliantly, her previous sour was nowhere to be seen.

Seeing her disciple like that, Adalinda surreptitiously smiled. It was too easy to please her disciple, not realising that she too was the same as long as food was involved.

"Ah I should contact him too".

Just as those thoughts floated over Adalinda's mind, from the corner of her eyes she spotted a huge holy magic circle being formed in the skies. The mana and techniques supplied into that magic circle was so powerful that even from this distance they could feel it.

"A dual magic circle has been invoked, it seems there are people capable of doing that even in this remote corner of the central continent".

She remarked; however, the next second her brows locked in a frown when she saw a rain of light fall down on the people of the capital.

"Why would that person use [Eye of Luminesce] on ordinary people? Does he not know that it won't have any effect on..." Before Lucine could finish her words, her eyes were suddenly attracted to the place where the coliseum was.

There amidst the hundreds of thousands of people, she spotted a familiar person. In fact, she had last seen him not long back. At this moment, when the rain of light fell down on him, his body started releasing black smoke, attracting the attention of everyone around him.

"What is that Demon Noble doing there? Uh-Oh, he is busted. Hehe, now everyone will find out that he is a Demon Viscount. Hmph, see what happens when you plot against me" Lucine snorted and folded her hands as if watching a good show.

While Adalinda had a face that said she couldn't comprehend what had transpired in the last few days that she was absent for him to get himself in so much trouble.

Two people whose levels were far above him, locked him down and even blocked the artefact that he was using to mask his appearance.

"Sigh, how did it come to this? How did he end up making these people his enemies" Adalinda said exasperated.

"Why don't we wait a little and see. I believe that demon noble is not ordinary and is hiding much of his strength" Lucine said narrowing her eyes when she saw Simon breaking away from the pressing aura of those two people and making a beeline towards the sky.

"What are you saying? it is still too early for him to face those guys" Adalinda shook her head, when she saw Simon not realising that it was not just one spell that the other party had deployed. There was also the holy barrier [Gladius] encompassing this whole city and blockading the sky.