

D. of Pride 421

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When he was given a report by his subordinate eight and eleven, a month ago, he couldn't believe it. That is why, he personally came to the kingdom of Ellesmere to check its authenticity. He hid his identity and pretended to work under the Sea god's trident just to dive inside the dungeon of the demon who was the source of all these rumours.

To his surprise, whatever he saw in this dungeon today only seemed to make him even more astounded and broke all of his common sense. A demon viscount controlling so many powerful subordinates, calamity class beasts, an army of golems and even the sacred clan of forest Spring spirits that have been recorded in legends was under him.

Not to mention the power he displayed when facing the combined might of the seven swords.

Everything that was related to the demon, was so exaggerated that Bryan was having a hard time to believe that the one in front of him was really just a low ranking demon noble.

Simon narrowed his eyes the moment the other party mentioned the name Cerberus. He had heard the name previously from Eleven, the mysterious person from the Nifty Table.

He and Denzel had pursued the man and during the investigation, the name Cerberus came up. It was thanks to them that Simon was introduced to that peculiar machinery called the Coordinate and was teleported to the forbidden trial grounds.

From all of this information, Simon was at least aware that the organisation Cerberus had some relation with the Coordinate.

'Is he here to get my dungeon core?' Simon thought internally as he examined the person. the thing that powered a Coordinate, was none other than the shattered fragments of a dungeon core. thus it was only natural for Simon to believe that the person in front of him claiming to be from Cerberus was here for his dungeon core.

"It looks like you are aware of the name of our organisation. I wonder how much Eleven has told you? Anyways, I'm not here under orders to conquer your dungeon or anything. I came here on my own accord to confirm something".

Bryan said taking out something from his space ring. He then threw it towards Simon but Bea who was on alert for all kinds of attacks moved first and appeared in front of Simon as if teleporting. She caught the thing, examined it for any kind of trap before passing it towards her master.

"A badge?" Simon looked at the thing that had the mark of a fierce three-headed beast. No matter how looked at it, it was just a badge. Apart from having an aesthetic value, the badge doesn't seem to have any other use.

"Indeed, it is the insignia of our organisation. I have deemed that you are a person worth collaborating with or more like we don't want to get into your bad side since it would be too much of a hassle. That is why, with the authority bestowed on me as one of the senior officials 007, I invite you to our organisation. How about it?" Bryan asked looking straight at Simon.

The latter looked at the badge and the person before shaking his head in refusal.

"I refuse".

"Haha, I thought so. But don't be so eager to deny the proposal, I believe our organisation can be quite the help to you. From what I can see, your ambitions are quite big and won't be stopped at just this third rate kingdom".

"You will be hearing the name Cerberus quite a lot in the future, I believe there will be plenty of opportunities for us to work together. For now, you should keep the badge with you, you will understand its importance later. Now then, I have observed plenty and have achieved my objective, it's time for me to get out of here".

Having said whatever he had to say, Bryan prepared to take his leave.

"Do you think you can just leave my dungeon without my permission?" Simon arched his brows curious that the man thought he can get away from them.

"Hehe, I know you and your subordinates are strong but if you want to keep one of the seven Cerberus with three digits to his name like me here, you would need much more than that. Since my skill [Guide] is telling me not to use the scroll of return, I will be using that thing although I'm somewhat reluctant to use it. But given that the [Guide] skill has saved my life multiple times, I believe that is the right choice".

Bryan murmured to himself without caring if the other party could clearly hear him. At some unknown point in time, his hand was holding a weird artefact that looked like a grail.

He was just about to pour the contents of the artefact on him when suddenly he realised there was a presence right behind him.

"Hehh, you say that we aren't strong enough to keep you here? Very well then, allow me to see how you shall escape from here" Bea said teleporting behind Bryan without even the latter noticing it.

p Bryan hurriedly turned around and parried the knife that threatened to dig into his skull with the artefact in his hand.

CLANG... an intense clanging noise echoed out and Bryan was sent smashing down onto the ground.

Whoosh... Though it didn't seem like he had suffered any damage as he swiftly picked himself up from the dent he had created on the ground. His body was completely unscathed though the same couldn't be said for his expression.

Right now his face was masked with a kind of disbelief as he watched a small crack appear on the artefact that he was holding.

"Hnn~ that artefact on your hand is not bad. To be able to parry an attack from me and still not crack" Bea appeared behind him once again like a ghost and muttered.

This time, Bryan wasn't able to dodge the attack in time and was hit squarely in the guts by a kick from Bea.

BANG... he crashed into a distant huge tree and stayed like that for a few seconds.

"Ahaha really, the surprises just keep coming. Who knew there would be such a powerful subordinate around? Ring of Discordance release" Bryan murmured and released the effect of the artefact that was suppressing his powers.

The moment he did so, the entire aura around him changed and his powers rose to a whole different level. That was not all, furs started growing in some part of his body and his arms and legs had elongated a little.

Simon who was observing this change from the distance, widened his eyes a little at this moment. Those long arms, fur and the change in the irises, these characteristics were definitely not that of a human.

What was going on? Was the man not human? Simon was quite curious, with that change the man had directly breached the level 600 hundred barrier and was now around level 650.

The man named Bryan was powerful; however, if he thought that it was enough to best Bea, then he was sorely mistaken.

"What kind of transformation is that, you became even more ugly" Bea commented appearing in front of Bryan at a speed that even he had difficulty spotting.

"Hmph, you are fast but so what? In terms of power, there is no way I will lose" Bryan said, his mana wrapped around his arms becoming a gauntlet of some sort which he used to punch at the maid.

BOOOM... one could imagine the burst of power released by a person above level 600. Just a simple punch without any skill involved from him, was powerful enough to create a berserk storm of wind within a few dozen meters of radius.

"Hnn~ really?! Is this the strength you were so proud of?" Nevertheless, the maid easily blocked his attack with her palm, without even being pushed back.

Next, she tightly clenched his outstretched hand and slammed him onto the ground like a ragdoll.

BAM.. BAM... BAM... It was a funny scene, after that transformation of Bryan, he was more than twice the size of the maid. One could even say that in front of his towering stature, the maid looked just like a child.

Being manhandled like he was some toy, the scene cannot be any more absurd.

BANG... after being slammed into the ground one last time, Bryan swiftly picked himself up and opened up a distance between him and the maid. Looking at his body, it didn't seem like he had suffered any physical damage but that couldn't be said for his morale.

'It can't be, am I being overwhelmed in pure strength even when I am partially transformed?' Bryan had an incredulous look on his face as he thought internally. Even though he was not fully committing his fight since he also had to be aware of the other joining in, but even then.

"That maid is quite good. Although she lacks combat experience just like the others, her senses and abilities are powerful enough to cover for her weaknesses" Irene remarked observing the fight beside Simon.

"Right, when it comes to pure physical strength, she is only behind Mercedes and Bianca amongst the Valkyries. Though it seems like she is not being serious at all, after all, Bea's strength lies in her agility which far outmatches all the other Valkyries by far" Simon commented.

When it came to absurd inter-dimensional entities like Null elemental, Irene might be far more knowledgeable than him but when it came to the twelve heroes, no one was more well informed than him.

Hearing Simon's words, Irene's crystal blue eyes started shining with a mysterious light which she used to examine the maid. Convinced by her findings, Irene nodded her head.

She did not know how Simon had created these maids but even when their true potential was locked due to the limitations of the summoning, the maid was doing a good job handling that person without using most of her current powers.

'If in the future the Valkyries can break those restraints locking away their powers, the valkyries would be in the upper tier of the [A] rank subordinates'.

Name- Bea

Race- Night Amazoness

Rank- [A]

Level- 699+[??]

Skills- Analysis, Extreme Enhanced Detection, Blunt Super resistance, Cut Super resistance, Piercing Super Resistance, Poison Immunity, Extreme High Speed processing, Parallel Thoughts, Ultra Natural Recovery, Ultra Minimal Mana Consumption, Herculean Endurance, Ultra Enhanced Strength, Ultra Enhanced Magic, Herculean Agility, Superior Battle Instinct, Ultra High Speed Regeneration, Five Senses Ultra Enhancement, Ultra Acute Control, Future Attack Prediction, Ultra Body Enhancement, Essence Mana Disruption, Golden Mana Lines, Space Magic Mastery, Cooking, Cleaning, Housework.

Racial Skills- [Spatial Manuevering], [AnnihaltionEyes], [Annihalation Slash], [Twelve Stride], [Bladeless Dance Mastery], [Ability Overlay], [Ability Conferment], [Night Amozoness Aura], [False Change], [Eclipse Flash], [True Shadow Concealment], [Eclipse Steps], [Sword Gullotine], [enlarged Perception], [Unification+++].

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What's amazing is that all of them had this restraint placed on them'. While Irene was thinking all that, the situation had progressed with Bryan being overwhelmed by Bea at every turn.

SLASH... SLASH... SLASH...

CHIIII... hundreds of slash wounds appeared on Bryan's body the moment he lost vision of the maid. Thankfully though because of his tough defence, the dagger did not manage to dig deep into his hide and because of his skill [Ultra Speed Regeneration] the wounds swiftly closed back.

Bryan glanced back at the weapon in the maid's hand, the quality of the dagger she used could only be said to be subpar. Their rank was so low that had it not been for the user, they wouldn't even be able to make a scratch on him.

Why was she using such a low tier weapon? Bryan did not care what he did know was that if he didn't use his full transformation, he would be able to best her. However, it was not the time and place to reveal that power here thus, he took out the grail from his space ring once again and poured out its content on himself.

The moment he poured the silvery liquid on himself, his body started giving off a strong spatial energy fluctuation making the surrounding space to distort around him.

Knowing what this phenomenon meant, Simon widened his eyes. Though he didn't have to do anything since Bea reacted faster than him. She used her abilities to move even faster to bring forth a storm of attacks that targeted Bryan from everywhere.

"You should keep that badge onto you, I'm sure we shall meet again," Bryan said turning towards Simon. His hand held a peculiar golden stone that was marked with runes. The moment he shattered it, a golden shield appeared around him and defended him from the attacks of the maid.

The moment Simon saw the golden shield appear around that man, he was immediately reminded of his Golden Guardian Stone. Both of them created a halo of shields around the user and defended them from all kinds of physical attacks.

Right after the words of the man sounded out, his body started twisting and distorting as if being sucked into a spatial rift.

"You bastard!! Do you really believe you can get away from here" Bea screamed, she was so furious that the words Annette whispered to the Valkyries about hiding their strength, was gone out of her mind.

At this moment, she was done holding back and used one of the skills called [Annihilation Slash]. The dagger she was holding that had nicks and cracks all around the blade, was at this moment enveloped by a powerful, dense dark green energy.

Without wasting a second, Bea erupted out with an absurd speed that was basically like high speed teleportation, and plunged her blade at the shield and onwards towards the man/beast inside it.

STAB... blood flowed out from the stab wound that barely missed Bryan's heart by a few inches. The dagger might have actually stabbed his heart had he not reacted fast and positioned his hand in between.

CRACK... the poorly made dagger unable to bear the burden of such a powerful skill, shattered apart at this moment.

"Too bad" Bryan smiled at Bea just before his body was sucked into the rift. One of the intruders, the man named Bryan who also called himself one of the three-digit numbers of Cerberus, successfully managed to escape from his dungeon.

Right after he disappeared, Simon and the other landed at that exact place, they too were a little surprised that someone had managed to escape from their grasp.

"What was that thing?" Simon asked turning towards Irene.

Even without asking, Irene knew what Simon was talking about. She mused for a moment before answering his question.

"I'm not sure but from what I can tell, that grail was a high ranking space artefact probably around [S] rank. but since Bea was able to make a crack on it so easily, I would say it was an imitation. Whatever the case may be, the content of the grail contains powerful spatial laws".

"By pouring that content on himself, he was immediately sucked into the location as set on the grail. I am not sure about the exact usage of the grail but it should be somewhere around it".

Simon nodded his head, even though she was uncertain of her answer, that was a plentiful observation from her given that she was only able to observe the thing for a few seconds.

"I have failed you master, I wasn't able to keep the person from escaping. I shall bear whatever punishment you have for me... even if its death" Bea fell on her knees and said agonisingly.

From her attitude, it was clear that she blamed herself for allowing an intruder to get away in front of her so much so that she was ready to make up for this blunder by sacrificing her life.

Exasperated by her extreme emotions from just one failure, Simon sighed audibly and told her to stop speaking such nonsense.

"There is no meaning to forfeiting your life in exchange for your mistake. I would even go as far as to say it's the most cowardly choice. One can only make up for their mistake while they are alive. So get up on your feet and learn from your mistake so that it never happens in the future."

"It doesn't matter if that man got away, we can deal with him when the time comes. More importantly, the reason behind me sending you guys to deal with the adventurers is for you to get experience. There will be plenty of times in the future when I will be relying on you all. That is

why, I want you all to not get daunted by your mistakes and learn as much as you can from your experience".

Simon spoke, his intention might have been to sound strict but to these Valkyries and his subordinates, his words sounded merciful and comforting.

Hearing his words, Bea had a red flush appearing on her face but so was Annette and the rest of the Valkyries, their eyes glistened with tears hearing their master's compassionate words.

"I will work harder so that this mistake never happens again my lord" the Bloodthorn demonic warhorse said resolutely.

Not wanting to be outdone by it, the Valkyries, [Helpers] and the Lightning Draconic Serpent too said in unison "We shall work harder master/my lord".

Satisfied by their reaction, Simon nodded his head. In the first place, it was also partially his fault for sending the Valkyries without even giving them proper weapons. He was always busy at improving his own strength that he completely forgot about improving the weapons of the Valkyries.

Yes, they were supposed to be one of the twelve heroes. However, without their powerful weapons also called as heirlooms they cannot even show their full power. When creating the game, Simon set the menu in a way so that players who have summoned the heroes, have to summon their corresponding Heirloom from the [Gacha] as well.

And mind you, due to the instruction from the company, the summon rate of the Heirlooms for the corresponding hero in the [Gacha] was very low. It was set as such so that the company could ensnare the player into spending more of their money on the game.

Simon being one of the lead developers at that time, knew what the company wanted and thus created many games like that, Laplace was no exception.

The reason behind the company using such a tactic was to grow the company and pay the salary of their researchers and developers. One of the few plus points for working for that company was the high salary that they offered to their employees.

Simon who had enjoyed this benefit at that time, couldn't complain now that the role had interchanged and he was put in the player's shoe.

The [Gacha] already had an incredibly low rate of summoning those Heirlooms but to make matters worse, the option was now bugged after the merger. He didn't know if the Heirlooms was still there or not or whether their summoning chance had increased or decreased.

Whatever the case may be, Simon at least knew that he would have to dump a lot of his DP into the option to even stand a chance to get something good. Just thinking about it made Simon's mood sour. Though fortunately for him, the DP that he was gaining was increasing every day.

Not to mention the adventurer who died here also provided him with a bountiful amount of DP. Thinking so, Simon focused his attention back on the remaining unconscious adventurers. The reason he left them alive was so that he could interrogate them.

These people clearly belonged to some group or some guild and had information about the forest Spring Spirits living in his dungeon. Simon wanted to know where and how they got this information from, how were they related to that guild that attacked the forest Spring spirits and who else was privy to this information.

There were many information that Simon wanted to spill out from these people and that is why he was still tolerating their presence. It was a good thing that he had summoned the Valkyries this time since one of the maids was a specialist in torturing and getting the information out of the enemy.

"Bea take these people to the empty floor. Get all the information I told you about from them" Simon ordered opening the [Main Menu].

"As you wish master" Bea replied immediately, a sadistic look on her face.

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Huff... Huff... inside a dark place where the only light came from the enemy in front of him, a man could be seen hacking and slashing with his broadsword.

"Don't get in my you god damn monsters" the man covered in wounds, was none other than Morgress who was carried all the way up to the entrance of the thirty fifth floor by that tunnel of wind.

Currently, he was surrounded on all fronts by Fire Eater Rats and Fire Fanged Mouse who were currently pouring out in droves from the underground.

KIEEEKK... their loud scream reverberating on this dark floor like an ominous symphony. As someone who had fought them before, Morgress could tell that something was wrong with these monsters at this moment.

Right now, they were being just too aggressive and violent that they did not even care about their own lives and threw themselves onto him trying to take him out in any way possible.

That kind of mad behaviour was as if these monsters had gone insane much like a warrior who had utilised the skill [berserk] too much. It wouldn't have been a problem if it was just a few of them but the entire colony behaving this way was much too unusual.

It was almost like their behaviour was being induced by something. Morgress did not know what could have possibly brought this change; nevertheless, it was not a good thing for him. If he wanted to escape from this dungeon, he had to invoke the scroll of return.

But to do that, he needs to channel all of his focus and mana onto the magic. However, in a situation where the enemies were diving at him in a suicidal manner, it was clearly impossible for him to use the scroll of return at this point.

Additionally, hiding was also not a good option since these monsters for some unknown reason are able to sniff him out. Alone and outnumbered, it was only a matter of time before he is completely devoured by these monsters.

Not to mention, he was already mentally and physically fatigued from the fight on the thirty sixth floor.

"GODDAMMIT... I will not die here... AHHHHH!!!" Morgress roared in a last ditch effort to mount up a resistance.

A couple of minutes later, Simon teleported onto the floor that was currently frolicking with berserk Fire Fanged Mouse and Fire Eater Rat. As he walked, he soon reached the place where monsters were currently encircling something.

Looking at the thing, more specifically the person that was lying in the middle of all of it, Simon locked his brows. At this moment, the state of the person was so wretched and ugly with wounds, burns, bite marks and scratched that it was completely impossible to recognise the person.

Although the person was in a dire state, he was nonetheless, still alive. Simon did not pity the person, nor did his eyes have any emotions, it was simply indifferent as they gazed at the man.

The monsters spread aside making a way for him to walk in. Simon approached the man, picked him up and teleported back. Right before he teleported, he looked towards the centre of the floor where a single tree was silently standing.

What was bewitching about that tree was that it was completely crimson in colour and wreathed in flames.

The next time he appeared, Simon was in Forest Spring Spirit Village where most of his subordinates had gathered to. After delivering that man to Bea for interrogation, Simon appeared in the Forest Spring Spirit village at Cecilia's insistence.

The floor was very different since the last time he saw it, not only the forest here gave a vast verdant feeling now, but even the ambience of mana here was very rich pointing to the formation of many Mystical veins underneath the ground.

Aside from that, the entire floor had various kinds of trees and plants growing in a neat and arranged manner. Each of these trees and plants was unique and could only be grown by these forest spring spirits.

If any alchemist saw this floor, they would go insane by the rare and precious variety of ingredients that could be found here.

The entire floor no doubt looked very mystical and colourful but the thing that attracted Simon's eyes the most was the big fat tree on top of the mountain overlooking the village.

"Big brother you are finally here! Quick, come with me. Everybody is waiting for you" Before Simon could tread towards the mountain to know more about the tree, Cecilia who spotted him teleporting, approached him at some point and pulled him towards the village.

The current village of the Forest Spring Spirits was much more lively and active than before. There were many more buildings built out of bamboo and up on the trees. The size of the village as a whole was twice as big too.

As Simon being pulled by Cecilia, walked the streets of the village, he noticed that every building and corner was decorated nicely. There were beautiful lamps placed all over the place and the Forest spirit people who greeted him were all wearing a traditional type of cloth.

The two of them walked around the village marvelling at the lively atmosphere before reaching the most magnificent house on a hill that was built by the forest spring spirits for him.

"Welcome My lord" the moment they arrived at the gates of the house, he was greeted by Fennel the elder, the [helpers], and a few other forest spring spirits.

"Before anything else, I want to congratulate lord Simon for his splendid victory against the intruders," Fennel said in excitement.

Simon nodded his head and looked towards the [helpers] with a questioning gaze.

"I know lord Simon did not want us to worry for nothing and this is why you told them to keep the skirmish that occurred on the thirty sixth floor a secret but it is not their fault. It just so happened that Cecilia was able to make them talk even when they were unwilling to" Fennel said with a helpless smile on his face.

Hearing what the elder had to say, Simon wasn't fazed. The [helpers] did indeed obey his orders and intended to keep it a secret. But because it was Cecilia who was one of the Guardian of this dungeon and much higher in rank than them who was asking the question, they couldn't disobey the authority that came with her role and thus spilled out everything.

At this moment, Simon felt his clothes being tugged and looked down to see Cecilia pouting her cheeks in anger.

"Big brother I was very angry at you for keeping it a secret from me. You fooled me when you sent me to the village didn't you hmph. Big sister Irene told me that the intruders were all big bad people and you were only trying to protect me by sending me here so I'm no longer angry at you. But I still feel left out...".

"Cecilia don't be like that, did you forget what day is today?" Fennel from the side said disciplining her a little.

"Oh right! I will not be angry at you today brother because today is the Spiritus Fortuna festival that our clan celebrates every year" Cecilia said beamingly, forgetting about her anger in an instant.

'Hey are you angry at me or not? Make up your mind' Simon wanted to retort; nevertheless, he was more curious about this festival the Forest Spring Spirits were talking about.

"Spiritus Fortuna?" he asked.

Fennel smiled in a similar festive excitement like Cecilia and explained "That is right my lord, Spiritus Fortuna is a festival where we pray for the continued prosperity of our clan and offer our harvest back to the nature that nurtures us all".

"It has been an ancient tradition of our clan to celebrate this festival every year and dates back more than ten thousand years ago. Last year it was her father, the patriarch that initiated the festival. This year, we hope lord Simon will be the one to do it".

Right after he said, that, he looked at Simon in expectation. It was not only him, but all the other forest spring spirits were also holding the same expectations in their eyes.

Seeing their faces filled with anticipation, Simon did not find it in himself to reject them and ultimately nodded his head. He was already here, might as well attend this festival and see what it is about.

"Alright, but even though you say that I should initiate the festival, I have no idea how the event or how to go on about it" This was the first time he was attending any festival in the world of Althaea after reincarnating. Thus he had no idea whether their festival here was similar to the one from his previous world or something totally different.

"Lord Simon does not have to worry, we all are here to help you. But first how about lord Simon go inside his house and change into the clothes our clan has prepared for you" Fennel said smiling at the end.

"Oh right right, brother hurry up and change into those clothes, I want to see how you look in them. Big sister Irene wore her own and she looks very pretty" Cecilia said jumping up and down in excitement.

Hearing her words, Simon was involuntarily curious. His mind couldn't help but imagine that icy cold beauty in those clothes.

Simon felt his hand being pulled and before he could do anything, he was led by everyone inside the house.

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Even though he mostly lived in the white palace on his Main floor, the house here was kept neat and clean with not even an iota of dust anywhere to be found. This goes to further show how dedicated the forest spring spirits were towards him.

Although not as big as the white palace, the bamboo house still had many rooms and halls. When Simon entered the house, he was greeted by the Valkyrie sisters who were already waiting for him there with the exception of Bea who was currently busy with the task that Simon had given her.

"Huh?! you guys are also here?" Simon asked.

"Princess Cecilia invited us here saying that you would be attending the festival in their village. Hence we came here to attend to your needs" Annette said gracefully.

"Is that so" Simon nodded his head, his eyes involuntarily trying to find a figure amidst them.

How could his actions go unnoticed by the Valkyries, they immediately knew who their master was looking for and spoke.

"Master, Mistress Irene is currently in her room trying out her clothes. On that note, we have already put your clothes in your room. Do you need our help to change master?"

"That won't be necessary" Simon rejected their offer much to their dejection.

"I asked them to change too, but they keep on saying that they can't change out of their uniform since it was given to them by you. Big brother, why don't you tell them to change too, I'm sure that they will listen to you" Cecilia insisted.

Simon considered his little sister's words and thought that it was not a bad idea for the Valkyries to also get a change of pace and thus ordered them to also wear the clothes provided by the forest spring spirits for the festival.

"But master, we are your maids, we must always be ready to cater to your needs" Annette voiced her opinion.

"Are you saying that you won't be able to fulfil your responsibilities as a maid while wearing other clothes?".

"That's not..." having no words to retort, Annette and the other finally consented much to Cecilia's delightment.

"In that case, I'll be showing lord Simon to his room," Fennel said leading Simon to his room that was on the first floor.

"Lord Simon please call on me if you need anything," the elder said waiting outside.

Simon entered his room which was not quite big not small. It was moderately decorated with crafts made by the forest Spring spirits themselves and gave a cosy feeling to the room overall. On the bed, were a pair of clothes made of materials that Simon had seen for the first time.

Kept on the bed were, simple flowing robes, that included an under tunic and an overtunic, cloak and a belt. On the touch, these clothes seemed extremely comfortable and soft, there was no doubt that these clothes would give the wearer a relaxed feeling.

Simon quickly changed into these clothes and came out of his room.

"Un... My lord, you look very regal in those clothes. The colours emerald green and black really do suit you well" Fennel commented a little awestruck with how the clothes and the colour matched Simon.

"The Forest Spirit robes is made of Aesilk Furvine, the colour was chosen by Cecilia herself. Does Lord Simon like it?".

"So they are called the forest spirit robes huh? The clothes are very comfortable and easy to wear, along with their traditional design and colour scheme, they are quite good" Simon gave his feedback.

On their way down, he asked fennel what exactly was this material Aesilk Furvine and how were they produced.

"My lord I'm extremely delighted that you are curious about it. The Aesilk Furvine is actually produced by grafting two specific types of trees that each produced their own unique types of material together. Both of these trees are parasitic and each tries to take over the other and in the result produces a type of material that when further processed is called the Aesilk furvine" Fennel explained making Simon curious and wanting to see this so called tree.

"Hehe, big brother you look amazing..." While they were talking, Cecilia came out of the corridor wearing her own forest spirit robes.

"So do you Cecilia".

As expected of the traditional dress of the forest spring spirits, it really matched them. Hearing Simon's praise, Cecilia rubbed her nose and went back inside where the ladies were dressing.

After a while, they came out looking all pretty and mesmerising.

"Big brother tada... how do they look?" Cecilia asked mischievously.

Simon's eyes fell onto the four Valkyries who looked very different in their current garb. If previously they looked beautiful and heroic with that armour and maid clothing, now they looked elegant and charming.

Their clothes were a little different than the robes he was wearing, the one they had donned on was a straight seamed garment that wrapped over their bodies and tied together by a sash on their waist.

Each of them were crafted extremely well and along with the colour combination, it complimented them well and enhanced their beauty even further.

"You all look very beautiful" Simon praised seeing how good the clothes were looking on them.

"We are undeserving of such praise" Annette spoke a little embarrassed. This was the first time they were wearing something that was not their uniform, naturally, it made them a little nervous.

However, when they heard their master's praise, they were glad that they wore these clothes as a smile bloomed on each and every one of their faces.

"Hehe, big brother you should save some of your praise for when big sister arrives" seeing her grinning and laughing like that, Simon didn't know why but he felt like she was up to something.

And he was right, it didn't take long for Irene to come out of her room wearing the dress that seemed to be just made for her. She was already a peerless beauty to begin with, but those clothes that were far from the usual ones she used to wear around him, made her look beguiling in a whole different way.

If previously the simple clothes made her seem like an ethereal beauty from a celestial realm that one could only gaze from afar, the current her was more like a goddess that had descended to the mortal realm far more realistic and closer to them than before.

BA-DUMP...

Simon felt his eyes widen and his heart beat erratically at this moment.

Irene too naturally felt his gaze on her, she tried to keep her composure but for some reason, her heart was beating like a drum and a crimson flush appeared on her cheeks. Her phoenix eyes landed on the clothes that Simon was wearing and they immediately became stunned.

There was no doubt that Simon with his demonic charm looked very handsome in those clothes but the reason why Irene was a little astonished was because she and Simon were wearing the same colour combination of clothes.

Even the embroidery they had on their clothes was a little similar.

"Cecilia..." Irene called out, her crystal blue eyes staring menacingly at the little girl.

Cecilia felt her body jolt at this moment, she moved her body around very mechanically and scratched her head.

"Hehe, I thought big brother and big sister would look very good in matching clothes".

Seeing her silly smile, Irene no longer found it in herself to be angry at her.

"T-That's right... Big brother, how does big sister Irene looks?" Cecilia said shifting everyone's attention away from her.

Seeing that Simon did not comment and just kept on staring at her, Irene couldn't help but ask "What is it?".

"You look stunningly beautiful" Simon stated his honest opinion but even then he felt like those words still did not do any justice to her beauty.

"You too, those clothes look very good on you" Irene complimented back. The two continued to stare at each other when Fennel from the side coughed.

"Ahem... I'm extremely sorry to disturb the moment but my lord everybody is waiting for you to initiate this festival".

"Right, let's go out then" Simon snapped out of his thoughts and turned around. When he came out, he was stunned to find the entire clan of the forest spring spirits gather at the village square, each of them holding a lamp in their hand.

The square was full of people and with rows and tables of food and drinks. Everything that was there, was prepared by the forest spring spirits themselves using the techniques that had been passed to them from their ancestors.

The moment Simon and his group arrived near the square, all of the forest spring spirits whether they were adults or children performed a ceremonious bow towards him showing their dedication and loyalty.

Simon knew that even if he told them to disperse with their formality, they wouldn't agree thus he simply didn't bother to raise the issue this time.

On Fennel's insistence, he, Cecilia, Irene and the others around him, were brought to the centre of the square where a big fireplace was set up. Beside it, was a staff that was made of a very old wood having six rings made of vines around it. The top of the staff was wide and was shaped like a torch.

Simon stopped in front of the fireplace and turned towards the forest spring spirit clan that were looking at him with eyes filled with pious zeal. Although, it still made him a little uncomfortable, being around the maid whose eyes showed a similar fanaticism, he was starting to get used to it.

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The Forest Spring Spirit clan had sworn an oath of subordination to him and were now an inhabitant of his dungeon. As long as they continued to be loyal to him, he as the dungeon master had the obligation to protect them and shelter them from all harm.

The battle that occurred on the thirty sixth floor and even now he was interrogating the humans so that he could protect the safety and prosperity of the clan.

"People of Forest Spring Spirit clan, please raise your heads" Simon declared, his newfound confidence along with the regal aura he was emitting at this moment, made him look just like a king who was addressing his subjects.

The Forest spring spirits, raised their heads as they were told and looked at Simon fervently. Currently, whatever little prosperity they had it was all because of Simon. He was not only their saviour, but had become a symbol of some sort for them. It wouldn't be wrong to say that the position he held in their heart was higher than that of a king.

"Lord Simon, please hoist the spirit staff to start the event" Fennel from the side instructed.

Since Simon had no idea of how to start the Spiritus Fortuna festival of the forest spring spirits, he asked Fennel to guide him. The spirit staff that Fennel was talking about was the old wooden staff that was kept beside the fireplace.

Simon strode forward, extended his hand and picked the staff up. The moment his fingers touched the wood, he felt as if a vast deep energy, pure and soothing, brush past his body. The feeling only lasted for a second or two before it disappeared.

Amazed, Simon observed the staff in his hand more carefully. The thing was so light that he basically did not even feel its weight.

Seeing his expression and knowing what he was thinking, fennel smiled and said "The spirit staff is an ancient treasure of our clan passed to us by our ancestors. It is made from the branch of the World Tree and contains a vast amount of natural energy. Only our patriarch or someone recognised by our people can raise the staff".

"That's right, I remember my father saying that it was a treasure bestowed to our clan by the Primordial Demon Lord of Pride in the ancient era" Cecilia added. She became a little melancholic thinking about the words of her father.

So that was the energy he felt before and why the staff seemed so light, Simon nodded his head. He was curious about the world tree that they mentioned and wondered if it was what he was imagining in his head.

He made a mental note to ask about it later, right now he had the task to start this festival on his hand. Anyways, after he picked the spirit staff, he heard the sounds of awe coming from the forest spring spirits.

It looked like the staff held some kind of special spiritual meaning to them since their gaze became even more reverent the moment he picked it up.

"Lord Simon, in the Spiritus Fortuna festival we offer our harvest to the nature and pray for the deceased near the spirit tree. Would you please lead everyone to that giant tree on the distant mountaintop".

Fennel pointed out at the distant tree on the mountain near the village. The tree that he pointed out was also something that Simon was also curious about and had attracted his gaze the moment he arrived on this floor.

The tree was extremely conspicuous with its numerous branches and how wide it was. With him in the lead, followed by Irene, Cecilia, his subordinates and the forest spring spirits on the back, they tread forward and after a while appeared in front of the wide tree.

Now in front of it, Simon stood rooted for a good few seconds as he marvelled at the tree that was like a piece of art. No, calling it a tree was incorrect since it was a cluster of trees that wrapped around each other to form one huge unit.

The thing was already amazing with how incredulous it looked; nevertheless, the most amazing thing about this tree was not its shape nor its numerous branches spreading chaotically but the vast amount of mana that it was releasing.

It was so dense that the ground around the tree had become moist. Looking at that cluster of trees, Simon had no doubt in his mind that all of those trees were mana trees grown from the seeds that he had given to the forest spring spirits to plant. Since then, they have undergone some form of mutation and had become something else entirely.

Simon tried to use his Analysis only to be stunned the next second to find that it was blocked by the tree. Yes, his attempts at analysis was blocked by none other than the tree itself.

"The Tree of Spirits, so it has finally grown to become a sprout" Irene muttered from beside him.

Hearing her words, Simon turned towards her and asked "What is a Tree of Spirit? And how did it block my analysis?".

"Tree of Spirits, an ancient tree that is said to be able to connect the spirits of the deceased with that of the living. The more spiritual significance the tree has, the more spirits will gather around it. It could be seen by the number of pale white leaves on its branches"

"It is no wonder that it was able to stop your attempts of analysis; after all, the tree itself is a spiritual entity. It usually takes a very long time and special conditions for the tree to grow and once it does, it will be able to show abilities far beyond your imagination. One of those abilities for instance is the ability to talk with the deceased".

"Although to do that, the tree would have to fulfil many conditions one of which is to grow to its adult form. The current tree of spirit is like a baby that needs constant care and attention. Fortunately, you have the aid of forest spring spirits, their natural energy and the abundant mana on this floor is the perfect source of nutrients for it" Irene explained looking at the tree of spirits.

Hearing her words, Simon was gobsmacked. It was already shocking for him to know that the tree can block his attempt of analysis but it can do what now?

Connect and talk with the deceased, what kind of concept was that? It was the first time that Simon was hearing something like that, not to mention the thing that can do that, was right in front of his eyes.

The huge wide tree that caught his eyes when he arrived on this floor, turned out to be a thing of immense value.

Simon hurriedly opened his [Main Menu] hopped over on the [Shop] option and checked all the features that were still unavailable to him or in other words would only get unlocked when his dungeon evolves up to a new higher rank.

In any case, even after searching the lists of features, there was no mention of anything about something called the tree of spirits which goes to say that what he has here is something unique that even the [Shop] option of the [Main Menu] didn't.

That in itself was enough to tell Simon the value of the tree of spirits. If the tree can really do what Irene said, then he had lucked out incredibly this time. The thirty or more seed of mana trees was nothing compared to the benefits the tree of spirits can provide in the future when it grows up.

This brings to mind... "What are the conditions that needed to be met for the tree to grow up?" Simon asked realising that there is a catch here.

Irene mused for a while before replying "First of all the tier of the dungeon needs to be at least a [B] rank, it needs a high density of mana constantly to even stay alive. Then the forest spring spirit floor itself must have numerous heart veins growing underneath it. There is the need for someone to constantly take care of the tree but that issue is solved by the forest spring spirits".

"There are many other conditions that even I'm not aware of but the ones I told about are the ones that are somehow achievable in the future. Perhaps, Cecilia would know more once she fully manifests the sleeping abilities within her".

At this moment, Simon's expression looked like he had swallowed a fly. Just a few seconds ago, he was so excited thinking that he had lucked out but who knew that the conditions to grow the tree of spirits would be this stringent?

Even the most simplest of the condition required him to evolve his dungeon to [B] rank, have numerous heart veins on the forest spirit floor. These conditions were already enough to snuff all of his excitement out, not to mention there were still more conditions there that even Irene did not know about and could only be found out when more of Cecilia's ability starts to awaken.

All in all, it could be said that even though he got himself an incredible thing, it was still too early for him to utilise it.

"Is something wrong Lord Simon?" Fennel asked from behind. Simon and the others had suddenly stopped the moment they reached the tree thus Fennel couldn't help but ask if something was wrong up there.

Simon shook his head saying that it was nothing and proceeded forward, his subordinates and the entire clan of forest spring spirits carrying lamps in their hands, followed behind him.

When they reached the mountaintop, they kept the lamps all around the tree and decorated it with white and purple clothes made of the same material as their garments. After they were done, they circled around the tree, closed their eyes and prayed for the deceased.

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Cecilia was no exception, she was amongst the forest spring spirits that were dressed differently. If he had to say, her attire was more like that of a priestess.

After the forest spring spirits were done praying, Fennel came to him and explained "Lord Simon, the tree we are in front of is called the spirit tree and according to the records our ancestors have left behind holds special significance to us. It seemed that they used to perform a prayer for the deceased around this tree during every Spiritus Fortuna festival".

"Unfortunately, after that dark history where our clan had to desert our home and live in seclusion, our race had never seen a spirit tree again. That was up until a few months ago when suddenly the tree that was mentioned by our ancestors, sprouted by the seeds that lord Simon gave us".

"The tree must have sprouted because the Spiritus Fortuna festival was drawing near, I believe it was an indication from the ancestors of our coming prosperity. Everything is starting to fall back in place, it is all thanks to lord Simon".

At the end of his sentence, the elder even became a little emotional.

"What is elder Fennel saying, I had nothing to do with it. Though I do agree with your words, the forest spring spirits will prosper and thrive just like how it was in the ancient times, you have my word" Simon declared, looking at Cecilia diligently tying a thin purple cloth in one of the branches of the tree and clasping her hands together in prayer.

He remembered the time when he first found her wounded and unconscious near the territory of the ancient treants. From then to now, not much time had passed yet that delicate doll-like girl, was able to stand on her feet after suffering through that terrible experience and smile along with her remaining clansmen once again.

From a complete stranger, she had inched closer and closer to becoming an existence that was like his little sister. Her presence and the changes she brought to his dungeon were so incredible that they could be seen on every floor.

Although at first, it was just on a whim, he told her that she can address him as big brother. But at some point in time, he just naturally accepted her form of address and even started to think of her as his own little sister.

Even if the festival was just a myth their ancestors had cooked up and the tree of spirit had no special meaning, Simon was determined to have the forest spring spirits continue to prosper inside his dungeon.

From Fennel's words, Simon could tell that the elder did not know about the tree of spirits and what it did. His knowledge came from the incomplete memories that their ancestors passed down.

After Cecilia and the others dressed like a priestess finished tying the many clothes onto the branches of the tree giving it a vivid colourful look, they stepped back and stood neatly in a row.

"Lord Simon please start this event by lighting a fire on top of this staff from those lamps" Fennel instructed.

Simon complied without any question. The staff that he thought looked like a unique torch indeed turned out to be one. The moment he went up to the many lamps placed near the tree and brought the top of the staff on top of it, it lighted up in a brilliant emerald green fire.

Simon had never seen this colour of fire before and it was beyond his logic why it did not produce any kind of heat. Nevertheless, he accredited this uniqueness to the staff since it was said that it was a branch of a world tree and held an immense amount of natural energy.

Weirdly enough, seeing the forest spring spirits praying silently like that and him holding the staff, he felt a sense of déjà vu for some reason unknown to him. He tried to recall if he had seen this kind of ritual anywhere else before or perhaps in his previous life.

However, nothing came to his mind leading to him discarding this thought. Now that the forest spring spirits were done placing the lamps, tying the clothes on the branches of the spirit tree and with their prayers, Simon as asked by Fennel, carried the staff and led them back to the village.

Back at the village square, Simon ignited the fireplace with the fire from the staff and started the Spiritus Fortuna festival. Basically, as an inaugurator, all he had to do was carry the staff, lead the forest spring spirits and ignite the fireplace from the emerald green fire of the staff.

The festivity started the moment he ignited the fireplace. People started dancing around the fire, chatting, drinking, and eating from the lines of dishes placed on the table. They brought out the ample harvest they had and started making unique kinds of dishes to keep the festivity going.

Simon did not shy away from participating in this festival as he tried out every kind of dish that was like a paradise for his taste buds and the unique kinds of wine that can only be brewed by the forest spring spirits.

It must be mentioned that he wasn't the only one enjoying the festival as Irene and the Valkyrie sisters could be seen roaming around the village square and trying out different kinds of foods, chatting, laughing merrily and enjoying the recreation.

Cecilia aided her aunt Daphne in preparing various kinds of foods all the while laughing and giggling with her friends.

He did not know about others, but for the maid sister that he created himself, it was the first time that they had attended any festival. Their joy and curiosity could be seen on their faces.

Simon sat down on a chair with a glass of wine in his hand and looked at the merry faces of each and every one of his subordinates. He felt like this kind of festival was a good opportunity for his subordinates to let loose sometimes, especially after the fight they had on the thirty-sixth floor.

Inside the dungeon it was not every time that they could celebrate a day like this, thus it was important that they enjoyed this day. The festival today also reminded Simon how crucial it was to have a day like this. The dungeon was their home and they who live in it should have a few days in a year like this to celebrate and enjoy.

p Simon decided to make a mental note of this and just like that, the dungeon Laplace would have various festivals the inhabitants of this place would enjoy. But that was something for the future, right now, Simon delved on the slight feeling of intoxication and the atmosphere of festivity around him.

The wine brewed by the forest spring spirits was unlike all the other ales that Simon had before, it must be mentioned that the unique types of fruits and vegetables that only a race like them can grow had mysterious effects and properties even in the simplest of their food.

The wine that he was drinking right now, seemed to be made of the extracts of some berries that grow underground. It had a strong burning taste along with the mysterious effects of increasing your physical abilities for a short duration of time.

As Simon silently immersed himself in this peaceful time, Irene approached him and sat next to the chair beside him.

Although this icy cold beauty always maintains a composed face like a lake, at this moment even Simon could make out that small smile hanging at the corner of her lips. Her face was a little flushed with how much she was dragged around by Cecilia who wanted her to try all of those dishes that her clan prepared.

"Here..." Irene said passing over a plate of food that looked like some kind of dumpling.

Simon looked at her with his questioning gaze only for the latter to shift her eyes and state "Cecilia told me to pass this to you. It is something that she made it herself".

Simon picked out one of the dumplings and asked "What is it called?".

"Hmm, she mentioned it was made of five fruit balls so... five fruit balls?!".

Simon smiled at her uncharacteristic reply and put the dumpling down his mouth.

"It's good!! why don't you try some?" He said nonchalantly.

Irene nodded her head, picked a dumpling and chewed on it "You are right, it's good".

"Haha, who knew that girl can cook".

Immersing in the festive moment, the two shared a plate of dumplings when suddenly, Simon narrowed his eyes.

"Where are you going?" Irene questioned when she saw Simon suddenly standing up.

"The new floor where the prisoners are. It looks like some of them have succumbed to the pain and are now willing to talk" Simon answered he was just about to open the [Main Mneu] and teleport to the floor when Irene suddenly said.

"Let me come with you, I want to know how they knew about the forest spring spirits".

Seeing her insist, Simon thought about it for a bit before shaking his head.

"Looking at how happy she is, I can see that Cecilia has been looking forward to this day. I'm sure that if the both of us disappear, she would feel hurt. That is why, at least you should stay here with her clan for their big day".

"Also, you don't have to worry I know how much you care for Cecilia and this clan, I will make sure to get all of the information out of them".

Simon reasoned for Irene to stay while he teleported out of the forest spring village. The next time he appeared, he was on the newly created floor he used to summon the Valkyries. Currently, the floor was turned into a cavernous area where the intruders are held captive.

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The floor was not so big thus it didn't take time for Simon to arrive at the proxy prison where the intruders are.

Bea was standing there waiting for him.

"Welcome Master".

"What did you find?" Simon asked striding forward.

When he saw the condition the intruders were in, even he couldn't help but turn his gaze away. After all, it was all too gory for him with their hands and limbs missing like that and their bodies tied up and crucified.

While it was true that he was the one who had set Bea's character to be a sadist that enjoys inflicting pain on others and is extremely good at torturing and extracting information from others. At that time he was just creating a game and thought that the concept was fun. Who knew that he would be reincarnated in the world of Althaea with the system of the game he made?

"Fufu... I found out everything that you asked me about, on top of that they even told me who they are working for and where they came from" Bea stated proudly, hoping that Simon would praise her.

How could the twinkle in her eyes go unnoticed by Simon? He nodded his head and said "You did a good job".

When he saw that Bea didn't seem particularly happy from his praise and was even a little dejected, he couldn't help but ask "What's wrong?".

"Eh?! Ah, it's nothing. I just thought that lord Simon would reward me after I completed the task" Bea replied looking at him with saddened eyes.

"Is that so? Alright, What do you want as a reward?" Simon asked gullibly falling for those eyes.

"Kiss..."

"What?"

"Pat... pat me on the head" Bea said looking all dejected and downtrodden.

"Oh! alright" Simon nodded, for a second there he thought that he heard something else. Shaking his head, he extended his hand and patted Bea's head as a reward for doing a good job.

"So who are these people and how do they know about the forest spring spirits" finished spoiling his subordinate, Simon turned serious and asked.

"It was as master expected, these people are from the same guild that attacked Princess Cecilia's village not too long ago. Their guild is apparently called Seven Swords guild and is located at a nearby city and is named after their guild master Morgress" Bea reported, with a pink flush on her cheeks.

The moment Simon heard that they belonged to the guild that was responsible for hunting down Cecilia's clan members, an unimaginable amount of anger rose within him. He wanted to incinerate and turn their bodies into ashes this instant, nevertheless, he suppressed his thoughts and continued asking questions.

"How many members are in their guild and how did they know about the forest spring spirits residing in this dungeon?".

Simon asked taking a deep breath. Even if he despised these people, he still needed them alive to get all the information out of them.

"I asked them about the number of their members but it seems like they had disbanded their guild not very long ago due to making an enemy out of a strong guild. The current members are only them... ah! Right, there was one more but it seems like he was killed by the lightning draconic serpent".

"It was that hateful assassin that tried to attack master. As for how they knew about the forest spring being brought inside this dungeon, it appears that one of their guild members at that time successfully managed to send a sound transmission to them before dying" Bea thought over the information she got from them before answering.

Simon nodded, he was not surprised that they had dissolved their guild after involving one of the top five guilds in their mess. He was not worried about the guy who was killed by one of his subordinates since he had enough people to investigate the information out of.

"Right master, there is something that I must tell you. It's about that guild that chased after master all the way from the capital of that kingdom. It appears that they are also involved in this" Bea reported, her tone contained killing intent when she mentioned 'that guild'.

From the time they became self aware, she and the other Valkyries were stuck in a void unable to move or do anything other than wait. The only salvation they had there was that they could see and experience what Simon was going through. Thus they knew about his grudge against that guild.

Simon who had maintained a composed face up until this moment, felt it crumbling at this moment at the mere mention of that guild. There was no way he would forget the feeling of helplessness and frustration he had felt at that moment.

He was utterly overwhelmed and falsely accused just because he was a demon. If not for the fact that he had a return transit stone in his hand at that time, his fate right now would have been very miserable.

Seeing her master's anguished face, Bea felt as if her heart was being crushed and couldn't help but get even angry at the prisoners who trembled from head to toe just from her gaze.

"Continue..." Simon said calming his nerves.

"Master it looks like they were here on orders from the guild master of sea god's trident who found them hiding in the northern outlaw forest. Although they say it was not them who revealed the secrets of forest spring spirits to that guild, I cannot trust them since they blame it on the guy who had already died" Bea looked at her master with a concerned face and reported.

As she had expected, the instant he heard the sea god's trident was behind all this, his face was masked with hatred and anger and at the same time, the fact that they knew about the forest spring spirits that resided here worried him.

From what he had experienced and saw with his own eyes about the guild, left him with the opinion that they were extremely biased and greedy. The incident this time also showed how poisonous and crafty they were.

If not for the fact that he had arrived in his dungeon in time, he did not know what consequences his dungeon and its inhabitants the forest spring spirits would have to suffer.

'Benny Beckerman, Sea god trident, Raven and Godwin... very good, you have truly managed to earn my ire. Now that things have reached this state, only of us can exist in this vast sky' Simon clenched his hands, his crimson eyes radiated his emotions.

"Did they sell this information to anyone else?" Simon asked.

"It was only the Sea god's trident it seems. I have tortured them till they were begging for death to confirm it from them" Bea said trying to release some of his worries. Nevertheless, it did not manage to have any effects as Simon's brows were still locked in a frown.

Even if he believed the words of these humans, the fact that the information of the forest spring spirits have reached one of the top five guilds of this kingdom was already concerning enough. He did not know much about the sea god's trident guild so he was not sure if they would spread this information to other guilds or if they would try to hoard this treasure for themselves.

Even if Simon did not see the spirits orbs of the forest spring spirits as a treasure, it wasn't true for others. Something as alluring on the level of forest spirit orbs would no doubt bring all the top and big guilds of this kingdom running over here to try to get their hands on it.

When he brought the forest spring spirits out of the territory of the ancient treants, he had promised Aldebaran that he would keep them safe and protect them from those trying to come after their clan. Thus it concerned him very much that this information was released.

HUFF...

Simon took a deep breath to calm himself. What was done was done, there was no point brooding over it. What matters right now was how he countered it.

"Master are you alright?" Bea asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine now. Sorry to make you worry. You did a splendid job investigating them, you can now go to the forest spring village and enjoy the festival with your sisters" Simon said in a solemn voice.

"What about master?" Bea asked still a little concerned.

Simon smiled to relieve some of her worries before saying "I will stay here and take care of these guys . Don't worry, as soon as I'm done here, I will be coming there".

Bea nodded her head and teleported away from the floor.

Now left all alone, with these people whose condition could only be said to be extremely miserable, he entered their prison and glanced at them.

His eyes were cold and not at all sympathetic at their state. They were his enemies and there was no pity in his heart for his foes. It might be harsh but it is a fact that one shouldn't pity their enemies because they wouldn't if their positions were interchanged.

Simon who had survived in this extremely dangerous forest alone, wouldn't make such a novice mistake as to take pity on his enemies.

"P-Please save us... we will not do it again, we have already told you everything, please have mercy".

A man with both of his hands missing said. His body was so pale that it looked like he had no blood inside him. Other than that, his nails and teeth were missing too and the state he was in, could barely be called alive.

From what he could recall from the features of the man, he was one of the two mages among the group who was adept in flame magic.

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"Where are your arms?" Simon asked causing the man crucified next to him puke the contents of his stomach out.

When he saw the man who had just vomited, there was dread in his eyes as he glanced at a particular place in the prison. Following the other guy's gaze, Simon's eyes went wide when he landed his sight on the thing.

There, on top of a fireplace skewered by daggers, were many pieces of what could be called meat. Looking at their expressions and the burning smell of meat, Simon immediately knew what had happened here.

All of the six people here were missing their limbs and their faces were as pale as a paper, some had already passed out from the shock while others had puked out the contents of their stomachs out.

There was no need to even ask what kind of horrible experience they had to go through. Bea after inflicting physical torture on them, forced the barbequed meat of their fellow teammates down their throats to break their last line of resistance.

Though Simon found it a little disturbing, he did not forgive them that easily.

"Do you know why you are in this condition?" Simon asked the man who had just asked for his forgiveness.

The man nodded his head and said in a hoarse voice "This is our punishment for intruding on your dungeon. Please forgive us, we know our mistakes, we will never do it again".

If the man could move, he would have already grovelled on the floor and banged his head to perform a kowtow.

Looking at how afraid these people were, Simon could see that Bea did a splendid job in breaking the will of these people. After Sable started begging, one by one all of the crucified people started doing the same with snot and tears on their faces.

They were much afraid of Bea and more so afraid of being subjected to the same cruel torturous experiments again.

"No, you are mistaken. Although I'm very angry at you guys for intruding my dungeon, I wouldn't torture you like this for that, at most I would kill you then and there. The reason that I am doing all of this is because of the forest spring spirits that you guys tried to kill and subdue" Simon said in a cold indifferent voice.

"W-We did not do it, it was all that bastard's fault" the one that spoke and pushed all the blame away was none other than the leader of this group who tried to use various means to defeat Simon but still failed in the end, Morgress.

Simon looked at the man and couldn't help but make a disgusted face. Even when everything was out and even after all of this, the man was trying to deny all the accusations. His attitude made Simon all the more disgusted of him.

"Even if you weren't the one that personally harmed the forest spring spirits, the subordinates that you sent to extract their spirit orbs were on your orders. Now too, the objective of your team diving in my dungeon was to get the forest spring spirits".

"The people of the forest spring spirit clan are now under my care which makes them my subordinates. It is natural for you to suffer when you are trying to take away something that belongs to me".

It was only now these adventurers understood why they were being tortured so brutally like that by that demon. It was not because his dungeon was intruded but because of the spirit orbs of the forest spring spirits they tried to get their hands on.

Perhaps because of the torture, the humiliation, the defeat or maybe because of all of it, the moment he heard the demon mention those incompetent subordinates of his, he forgot the situation he was in and started shouting and throwing curses hysterically.

"It is all that bastard's fault, if only he could do his job properly, we wouldn't have been in this mess. No, in the first place, I shouldn't have given him that job, I should have found someone more capable".

Simon did not know who was the person that Morgress was cursing so frantically but he could more or less make a guess. The twin lightning sword in his inventory was something that used to belong to that person after all.

Looking at how disgracefully the man acted, Simon lost all interest in them, now that he was done investigating and extracting all of the information out of them, he had no more use for these people.

He could simply kill them or keep them inside the prison so that they keep on producing DP for his dungeon. Although the second option sounded cruel, like livestock being kept alive only to be butchered later, these people did not deserve better.

The second option will keep on providing him with a steady amount of DP, one could imagine the points these elite level adventurers whose average level was above 470 would generate.

Nonetheless, it was a hassle to keep them alive and he wasn't much interested in the second option since his dungeon already had a marginal amount of DP and was producing more by the second. Even if he reared them as a DP generating livestock, it would be like adding a few buckets of water to a well.

What he was lacking right now wasn't DP but levels. In that case, it was much better for him to kill them and gain the experience points from them. Perhaps, it would also be best for them to die rather than be kept alive in that condition.

Simon turned around to face the exit, he snapped his fingers and multiple flame spears appeared behind him and pierced the heart of these mentally broken humans.

AHHHHHHHH... their screams resounded on this dark cavernous floor before like a dark symphony being snuffed out with the flames. Only their ashes remained after a while.

SHINE...

"?"

At this moment, something shined from the ashes of the adventurers. When Simon turned his gaze to see what was it exactly, he found a couple of space rings dropped on the floor. Needless to say, they belonged to these adventurers.

Although Simon had no interest in their belongings, he out of habit extended his hand and pulled their space rings towards him. Even if there was nothing special inside it, it was still his spoils of wars and the reimbursement for his troubles.

As Simon checked through the contents of each space ring, he found some decent artefacts around [C] tier and a few vials of elixirs and potions. The quality of which could hardly be compared with the ones he could buy from the [shop].

"No wonder that princess was so inquisitive when I took out my elixirs" Simon mused.

After sorting through five space rings, Simon still did not find anything that attracted his attention. When he just inserted his mana into the last space ring and was about to be done with, his brows suddenly locked together and he took out the contents of the ring outside.

An old parchment of paper, a scroll, a few weapons and a pouch of coins floated in the air.

Simon immediately lost interest in the weapons since all of them were [C] or [D] rank and instead focused his gaze on the two papers. The first thing that he grabbed was the scroll which was marked with many ancient runes and letters.

When he opened the scroll, he saw that it had many complex drawings and magic circles inscribed on it and a spatial ripple radiated out of the scroll.

"This should be the scroll of return that Irene mentioned" Simon observed, even without using [Analysis] he could tell that it was the scroll of return that the adventurers wanted to use to get away from here.

When he used the [Analysis] this was the result he got.

 Scroll of Return Grade [1] Rank [C]- A scroll enchanted with the spatial laws of space magic. Only an alchemist with mastery over space magic, can create a scroll of return. It requires extreme concentration and understanding of space to chart out the complex runes on a scroll. It needs a fixed transit point and exit to work and cannot be changed once set.

Reading the information provided to him Simon kept the scroll of return in his inventory. Although, it was no use to him since its transit points were already set, the scroll was nevertheless something that had to do with space magic.

Simon who was extremely interested in space magic found it a waste to just throw it away. After he kept the scroll of return in his inventory, his gaze went towards the pouch filled with coins.

When he opened it, he was a little surprised to find that it was filled with platinum coins. At a glance, there were more than hundreds of them inside the pouch. This amount of sum was by no means small, if he took the amount to any auction he would easily be able to grab some good stuff.

It can be seen from this how rich the guild master of the seven swords was. Simon put the pouch in his space ring without any shame and fixed his gaze on the last item.

Honestly, the last time was quite peculiar and was different from all the other items inside the ring. It was a parchment of paper quite worn from the wear. It looked ancient and was missing another half.

When Simon observed the paper, he realised that it was some kind of map. The drawings in it was very old and some part of it had already dissipated. Simon tried to turn the map upside down, front and back nonetheless, it was still too confusing to say where this place marked on this map was.

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Although Simon didn't know where this place was, from the legends marked on this map he could at least tell that it was leading towards some kind of graveyard marked by enormous bones.

"Could this be some kind of treasure map?" Simon thought internally, the fact that he got this from an adventurer, further backed this idea.

If it really was some kind of treasure map, then there must be another piece to this map somewhere else. He tried checking the other space rings once again; however, it looked like the other piece was not there. Without the other piece, it was hard to tell where the place marked on the map was.

'Maybe this is why even their guild couldn't get their hands on it?' there was no telling where in the world the place marked on the map could be without the other missing piece. Thus Simon kept the map in his space ring without wasting his time any further and exited the place.

Days passed by and just like that, and a week had already gone by.

Inside the adventurer's association branch of the tower town. The building was not very big with only two stories. Though one couldn't say that it was small since it was still under construction.

The first floor was the lobby where the bar and the quest board was located. At this moment, people were chatting and drinking with their fellow teammates, drowning in the success of their recent adventures.

"Gahh... that was a nice drink, another one"

"Haha, drink up... the drinks are all on me today!!" Harris said gulping down the alcohol from his mug.

Although they were being boisterous and noisy, nobody cared since it was just like a daily occurrence inside the building. Wherever the adventurers went, the place was bound to be noisy after all, these people weren't bound by any laws or rules like the knights.

The table where Harris and his team sat, was particularly noisy today as they merrily sang and drank. Seated not far away from their table was, Bolan and his group but unlike the other group, the atmosphere at their table wasn't that bright.

"Is it safe to assume that..." Bolan asked.

"Yeah that guy is already dead" his teammate seated by his side, completed the sentence for him. He then shrugged his shoulder and said "well, we did our best and searched for him all around the floor but we couldn't find a single of him. Given that he does not have any adventure experience, it is only natural to assume that he had already died".

The person they were talking about was the provisional adventurer that they had recruited to go along with them to the eighth floor around a week ago. The mission was fairly easy and was just about mining the WhiteSilver ores growing on the walls.

Although the monsters on that floor might be a problem, if one stayed in group and avoided getting lost in the mist, they would be fairly safe.

They all thought that if it was them, bringing a newbie to make up for their headcount won't be a problem. But due to some unknown cause, their team ended up fainting while mining the ores. It was not just their team but all of the people there at that time became unconscious.

After a while when they came to themselves, they asked around as to what had happened, what was the cause of this mysterious sleep. They even filed this issue with the adventurer's association who told them that they would investigate this cause.

However, since there were no casualties, the mystery behind it was yet to be solved. No, saying that there was no casualty would be wrong since the provisional adventurer who was there with them at that time went missing after they all woke up.

Naturally, Bolan and his team wasn't among those people who just discarded people like that, they tried to ask other teams that were on the eighth floor at that time and even searched for him around.

Nevertheless, their search bore no result, no one had seen the provisional adventurer on the other floors nor come out of the dungeon.

There was no need to even mention, given the clues it was obvious that he had died and was eaten by the monsters.

"Sigh... that guy did not even have a map nor a navigational skill to walk out of the mist. To have lost a guy as soon as we recruited him, what a bad omen" Bolan said not being able to enjoy his ale.

"Team leader, it's not your fault or ours" another one of his teammates tried to console him.

"You are guys right, it's not our fault but it does reflect on our team doesn't it?" Bolan stated.

The other guy went silent unable to say anything in return. It was as Bolan said, losing a newbie right after recruiting him said a lot about a team. The Adventurer's association especially, who kept a record of every adventurer, team and guild, could give a good or bad review of their team which might even ultimately lead them to disband it.

Unlike guilds which are registered by the adventurer's association and are considered a fixed entity, teams are a group of people forming a party. The aforementioned party can be temporary or permanent depending on its members.

Nevertheless, unlike a guild, a party can be dissolved at any time, it can be due to a collision of interest from the members or simply because the party had run its course. In any case, it is not unusual for a team to disband suddenly.

There are many parties being formed and dissolved on a daily basis, the adventurer's association does not have the leisure or the time to keep registering and tracking all of them thus the adventurer's association only registers those party that has been in existence for more than three months and inputs it in the adventurer's card and based on it, the association can give the party their verdict.

If they find a party using trickery and unethical means, they would immediately order the party to disband or in the case of a temporary party bar their entry from the dungeon. It is because of this reason that Bolan was worried.

Their party was a registered one and he was afraid that the adventurer's association might ask their party to disband in the future.

Although it is not uncommon for a newbie to die inside the dungeon, the fact that it happened when he had just joined their team changed this conception. Now the blame for the provisional adventurer's death was naturally, accounted to their team.

How could this not upset Bolan and the others?

HAHAHAHA... from the other side of the hall came the loud laugh of Harris and his team being merry. This seemed to further irritate Bolan.

"What the hell is wrong with that guy today, why is he being so loud?".

"You cannot blame him leader. I have heard that they have just successfully cleared the ninth floor and are now amongst those few teams and guilds who have explored floor up till two digits" his team member explained the reason behind Harris there laughing and drinking so much.

"Tch" Bolan spat and shifted his eyes away. Though he hated the guy, he still recognised his abilities.

As he was frustrated over his team lagging behind, the entrance of the association was pushed open and a group of people in expensive adventurer's gears entered inside.

The moment they entered, their presence drowned the noise of the crowd and suppressed all the other presence within. Their powerful aura along with their armours and gears, told others how strong they were and not to be messed with.

The instant they entered, they garnered the attention of every adventurer present inside. Hushed chatter and mutter could be heard from the people as they discussed about the identity of the group, Bolan and his team were no exception.

Given that these people seemed to be of the same profession as them and given their powerful auras, it was only natural that they were intrigued.

"Who are these people?" Bolan asked looking at them walking straight towards the receptionist desk.

The adventurer's association branch in the tower town was set up not long ago and was only a small unit, thus it did not have a branch manager and was considered a sub division of the branch located at the city of Mountmend.

"How can leader not know them? They are one of the big guilds from the southern region of the kingdom, the Tyrant Mountain. I heard that a few of their participants managed to secure a place in the top hundred in the battle of the Finest tournament" his teammate reported.

Tyrant Mountain, Bolan suddenly recalled hearing the name of this guild. From what he could tell, the guild wasn't as powerful as the top five guilds but every year they were slowly but surely inching closer. The groups of adventurers in front of him were proof of that.

As all eyes were stretched taut on them, they arrived in front of the receptionist's desk, had a talk with them and passed over the contents of their spatial ring. The receptionist took it inside for analysing by the other specialist staff of the association before coming outside and nodding her head at them.

After that, the receptionist in front of the puzzled eyes of every adventurer removed one of the Red Notices from the quest board.

"What?!!" the moment the Red Notice was taken off, it was as if a storm had hit the adventurer's association with all the adventurers going crazy.

There was no need to doubt the authenticity of the actions of the adventurers association; after all, they wouldn't move without confirming the facts a few times. Plus the guild that had provided this information was one that cannot be looked down upon.

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After removing the notice, the receptionist announced in a voice that was audible across the entire hall "Everyone, the red notice, had been removed, areas starting from thirty-first floors are now good to explore again".

CHATTER CHATTER...

People started chattering the moment she said those words, some even ran out to relay the information to others, while some ran up to her to bombard her with questions.

In any case, the adventurers association was extremely shaken right now. The notice that was removed by the receptionist from the quest board was about the peculiarity of natural orders inside the lower floors of the dungeon.

It was stated by some of the elite adventurers that the lower floors was shrouded with a crimson haze that made the monsters on those floors extremely aggressive and violent. That was not all, the disorder even affected the state of mind of humans if they were exposed to it for a long time.

The rumour came up around a week ago and was further confirmed by many other guilds and parties. Naturally, the adventurer's association took note of it and asked the adventurers to avoid those floors for the time being seeing that the number of casualties was starting to pile up.

The red notice detailing the peculiarities of the lower floors posted on the quest board was now removed. People were bound to be curious as they asked the association for the cause of such peculiarity.

Bolan and his team after finishing up their meal went up to the quest board, since whatever was happening on the lower floors was of no concern to them who were just [D] rank adventurers. They checked the commissions post in the quest board trying to find a suitable one for their team.

As Bolan was looking at the quest board, his eyes inadvertently went towards one of the freshly placed parchments. The job was to seek and report of any sighting of the no named team who have disappeared inside the dungeon for more than a week.

The task was commissioned by the Adventurer's Association themselves and the rewards were not that bad. Since it was just to report any sighting of the no named team, it wasn't a difficult mission even by their standards.

However, the no named team was a powerful group of adventurers who always covered their faces with masks and robes and mostly delved on the lower floors unlike them. It is unlikely that, Bolan and his team whose strength can only take them to single digit floors be able to find any clues about them.

'Come to think of it their disappearance strangely coincides with that disorder that was going around on the lower floors and that newbie's mysterious disappearance too' Bolan thought internally before shaking his head.

His team members found themselves a suitable commission from the quest board and started making preparation to dive inside the dungeon once again. Perhaps if Bolan thought over it a more, he might have been able to unveil more clues and approach closer to the truth.

In any case, the news about the no named party getting massacred inside the dungeon will soon find its way to the adventures causing huge waves around the tower town.

Main floor of the dungeon Laplace, inside one of the halls of the white palace.

Simon was seated on a sofa, standing in his front not far from him, was Coleus who was currently giving a report.

"I see so you have removed the crimson aggression stalk. How is the situation with the adventurers now" Simon asked resting his head on his hand that was on the armrest.

"Yes, because we have removed the crimson aggression stalk that has been stopping the adventurers so far, they have started their exploration from the thirty first floor once again. Currently, they have reached the thirty third floor and seemed to be from a guild called tyrant mountain" Coleus reported.

"Hmm? Tyrant mountain you say?" Simon narrowed his eyes and asked mid-report.

"Is there something wrong my lord?" Coleus asked perplexed.

"It's nothing, continue on" while Coleus kept on reporting about the various activities of the adventurers spread over the various floors of his dungeon, Simon tried to recall where he heard the name before.

'Tyrant Mountain' as he repeatedly uttered this name in his mind, it finally came to him. The battle of the finest, in that tournament one of the big guilds that came from the southern region was precisely called the tyrant mountain.

'To think that they would come all the way here to the northwestern borders. It seems like my infamy is starting to attract all of the big shots from the kingdom' Simon thought internally.

The distance from here to the southern region of the kingdom was quite large thus it made no sense that they came all the way over from there just to dive inside a [D] rank dungeon.

'Their goal should definitely be me. In that case, it wouldn't be long before even they arrive here too' the ones he was thinking about were the top five guilds of this kingdom. Whether it be in terms of strength or fame, the top five guild far surpass all the other guilds in this kingdom.

Simon had seen a good chunk of their strength during the tournament. Frankly, he did not want them to come over here right now. However, it was only a matter of time before they knock on his door.

Now that he had taken care of Morgress and his team members, other big guilds will soon target his dungeon. Soon was an understatement since it had already started. Tyrant mountain, one of the big guilds from the south was already here trying their strength on his dungeon.

A week had already passed since the defence of the thirty sixth floor. To counter the constant flow of adventurers in his dungeon Simon had added ten new floors and had restructured the lower floors a little.

For example, the current thirty sixth floor was no longer the floor inhabited by the lightning draconic serpent and was instead home to Blue lizardmen and terodactyl both of which are the evolution of the monsters inhabiting his upper floors.

Their power level were around level three hundred and their colony was in the thousands. Of course, it took quite a lot of DP to spawn so many of them but currently since his DP income was more than his expenditure, he could easily afford it.

Also, Simon discovered that the individual cost of spawning these evolved monsters was more than their post evolved form. Well, the cost may be high, but one also had to account for their combat strength and levels which was higher than the post-evolved monsters.

Until now Simon did not spawn these monsters since the cost of these monsters was higher than his income earlier. Now though with so many adventures constantly flooding his dungeon, it would be a miracle if his DP did not increase.

At the same time, with the increase in quality and quantity of adventurers it was crucial that he spawned monsters that had the ability to stop them or somewhat resist them. Thus it was necessary to spawn the evolved species of the monsters to halt the progress of the adventurers.

That being said, dungeon Laplace was still a [D] rank dungeon and the monsters that could be spawned by him using the [spawn] option right now was limited in race and levels.

Simon had the DP to summon ogres, soul catchers, Blood hounds and other superior races of monsters, he knew that they would easily be able to handle the current level of adventurers.

However, a [D] dungeon was extremely limited with the type and species of monsters that could be spawned inside it. Nevertheless, it was not like Simon had no way to go around this restriction. Especially given the cheat that was Cecilia and the pond of serenity, it was only a matter of time before stronger species of monsters could be seen roaming in his dungeon.

During the passage of a week, Simon had dived inside the serenity pond and had unveiled many mysterious items growing at the bottom of it. The Crimson Aggression Stalk, Cerulean Mutation Crystals, Viridescent Mutation Crystals, and Attribute Blossom Moss were some of the things that he had found.

Of course, since the pond of serenity was also in its growth stage, there were many other things still in their initial stage of formation and are still not usable yet. In any case, Simon was happy with the harvest he had from his trip to the bottom of the pond.

The crimson aggression stalk just like its name, was a stalk that later grew into a burning tree when planted. It had the effects of releasing a substance that induced any entity to go berserk. The effects of the crimson aggression stalk had a fixed period of time and was a one-use item.

The Crimson Aggression Stalk was the thing that stopped the progress of the adventurers for the past week.

Cerulean and viridescent mutation crystals on the other hand, were condensed crystals whose effects were similar to the crimson mutation crystals.

Unlike the crimson mutation crystals which induced a fire elemental mutation on an entity, making them able to use the attribute of fire, Cerulean and Viridescent crystals on the other hand induced water and wind attributes of mutation respectively.

Just like the crimson mutation crystal, he found growing on the bottom of the pond at that time, the cerulean and viridescent crystals he found were of the same Grade [1] rank [C].