

## D. of Pride 671

### Chapter 671 671- Presentation Of Power (3)

Belial's voice resonated through the hall, carrying with it a weight of authority and ambition. His speech served as a testament to his rise to prominence and a subtle reminder to all that his reign has only just begun.

While his tone carried a certain level of arrogance, it remains measured, not veering into excessive haughtiness. Belial understood the delicate balance of maintaining respect and admiration from his fellow demons and especially from those peering from the distant lands, even as he revels in his newfound status as the Demon Lord of Envy.

"Hahaha, well said my lord, this one is completely awed by your ideology and creed. Your words have left an indelible mark on the Hexennacht and on the memories of those who witnessed it. I'm sure that you will bring a new dawn for all of us demonkind and usher us into a new era".

While the crowd was silent as to how to process all this display of power, Agares, one of the four Demon Archdukes seated in the distance, started clapping and applaud Belial's passionate speech.

The other demon archdukes also gave their congratulatory words to the Demon Lord of Envy.

"Un, that was a good presentation. However, I believe some of our guests might not have been completely satisfied by just this. Belial, why don't you make this assembly more exciting?"

"I'm sure some people still do not have a good gauge of your power from just watching all that. You would be shaming your predecessors if you do not show them what the newly crowned Demon Lord of Envy is capable of".

The one to speak this time was Gareth. Although his words seemed to be addressing the crowds, his eyes were continuously looking up towards the sky.

Hearing the words of his father, Belial nodded his head. His lips curled into a wicked smile as he raised his hands and addressed the gathering once again.

"It is you said. I cannot prove I am worthy of the title of Demon Lord simply by showing off my army. Since the esteemed audience is not satisfied, I shall make this Hexennacht even more interesting by inviting challengers. My fellow Demon Nobles, I offer you an opportunity unlike any other, to witness the might of my three commanders as they engage in combat with any who dare to test their mettle. Is there anyone who wants to challenge them?".

With those words from him, the crowd was stunned as they murmured in a low voice. The challenge from the Demon Lord ignited a fire within their hearts.

Many Demon Nobles exchanged glances, their eyes gleaming with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. Belial's invitation was a chance to prove their own worth to him and also gain his favour at the same time.

If they could assist him when he is trying to defend his title and prove his capability to the whole demonkind, they would surely reap many benefits in the future.

A demon duke who didn't want anyone else to get on this bandwagon before him, spoke up.

"An excellent idea my lord. In that case, let this unworthy subordinate of mine to test the powers of the Esteemed commanders of Envy. Jeronis go up".

"Understood master" on the beckoning of that Demon Duke, the subordinate name Jeronis stepped forward.

'A Gargoyle huh, they should be a good opponent for a warmup I guess' Belial grinned and nodded in approval "Very well, as the Demon Lord of Envy, I give you the permission to challenge any one of the commanders of your choice? So who shall it be?".

The Gargoyle raised his head up and spoke "I challenge the Commander of Resentment".

"Alright" Belial casually waved his sleeve and created a spatial gate that led to some unknown place.

"This gate will take you to where Resentment is. I have explained everything to him, give your best shot" Saying that, the Demon Lord sent the gargoyle through the spatial gate.

After that, he manoeuvred the Distance Viewing Array and brought the screen to a vast grassy plain. There, two figures stood facing each other. The two figures were none other than the Commander of Resentment and the Gargoyle.

"Resentment, remember this is a mock battle, so you cannot go too extreme. If you understand that, then let us start this battle".

With those words, the clash between the challenger and the Commander of Resentment commenced. The air crackled with anticipation, the crowd watched with bated breath as the two combatants unleashed their powers upon each other.

Magic clashed, blades clashed, and the ground shook with the force of their blows. The sheer intensity of their battle evoked a mixture of awe and envy among the onlookers.

Meanwhile, one particular group or more precisely one demon to be specific, was stuffing his mouth with food without giving a rat's ass to the battle going on.

"Hey, don't you want to watch the battle between those two? It will be a good opportunity to size up the other party's strength" Simon remarked gazing at the array displaying the fierce battle.

"Don't even bother, this is all just an elaborate scheme to make Belial and his commanders look good. There is no way, we would be able to gauge anything from watching that battle. The gargoyle that they sent up is no match for the Commander of Resentment whose level is quite high".

"Compared to that, the gargoyles level although hidden, shouldn't be above level 700. And besides, it is unlikely that Belial will reveal his cards openly to everyone. I'm sure he has ordered Resentment not to use his real strength or any [Commandments]" Oswald replied stacking one plate after another.

It was as he had said, the whole thing was staged. The Gargoyle who is said to possess a body sturdier than even Mythrill was easily damaged and the pulsing mystical energy on its body was snuffed out.

And although it looked like the battle was a fierce one, it was no doubt an overwhelming victory for Resentment.

Clap... Clap...Clap...

"I have no words, that was indeed a splendid victory. I'm genuinely awed and impressed by the strength of Lord Belial's commanders. I cannot help but bow my head down in fear and reverence".

The master of the gargoyle, the Demon Duke wasted no time to bootlick right after the battle ended.

"Haha, you overpraise me. Your subordinate did quite well against resentment as expected of a Gargoyle, even amongst the [A] rank subordinate, they are quite good. Don't worry though, your subordinate is only knocked unconscious. I will be sending someone later to bring them. However, that was hardly a battle and wasn't a good enough gauge of Commander's strength" Belial responded smiling helplessly.

"In that case, how about I send another subordinate of mine? They are a Demon Marquess and should be more powerful than Jeronis"

The Demon Duke proposed. It was clear that he intended to take this chance to suck up to Belial and deepen his position. Of course, he wasn't the only one who wanted to ride on this bandwagon.

"How could that be, you just sent your subordinate. Lord Belial, please allow this one's subordinate to give it a try. My subordinate is much stronger and should be able to give quite a challenge to the three commanders".

The other high ranking demons wanting to establish a good relationship with the new Demon Lord, proposed to send their subordinates to challenge the three commanders.

The crowd was just starting to boil over who would send their subordinates up, when a colossal pressure, one that twisted the very fabric of space descended onto the venue. Immediately all the commotion that rose, was snuffed and a ghastly silence fell upon the venue.

All the demon nobles turned to look towards Demon Archduke Gareth. That pressure just now, came from him. Gareth was silent as his eyes wandered about seemingly thinking something.

He had been watching the spectacle with an indifferent eye up until now. However, he sensed that sending the subordinates of the Demon Dukes will not cut it, there was a need for a true test of power that will show those observers that his son is worthy to be crowned as one of the Demon Lords.

"Duke Megera, it seems that your subordinate was not an adequate gauge of the commanders' strength. Since you are so enthusiastic about all this, why don't you go up next and personally face one of Belial's three commanders in combat?"

"I believe that will be the true test of power. How about it? Let us all witness the clash of powers between two forces of great prestige." Gareth spoke with a voice filled with authority. This was not a request, but a command.

Duke Megera who he called out, was none other than the Demon Duke who was the master of that Gargoyle. At this moment, he had quite an ugly expression on his face as if he swallowed a fly.

In his attempt to suck up to the new demon lord, he had dug himself into the trap. He couldn't help but want to curse out loud.

Challenge the commanders? It was fine if it was just sending his subordinate but him going up personally. Why should he, a mighty Demon Duke do that? In the first place, there was no merit to it and only disadvantages.

Whether he won in which case he would be offending the demon lord or lost whereupon his status and prestige will be crushed and he will be rendered a laughing stock, there was no advantage for him in it.

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If anything he would very much like to reject it; however, that was not possible either. It was the order of a Demon Archduke and not just any Demon Archduke but Gareth at that?

In terms of influence and power, he was an existence who could only be described with the term, old monster. That Gareth had given him the order, there was no way Megera whose age would not even exceed 1500 years could reject him.

All he could do was give in to his fate and nod his head. While his fellow demon duke grinned at his misery, Megera stepped out from among the crowd.

"As you wish, Demon Archduke Gareth. I shall take up this chance and challenge the mightiest of commanders."

"Oh!! You wish to challenge Jealousy? Very well, this battle will be a good test to show all the demons of the realm, the power of the three commanders" Belial accepted the challenge and informed Jealousy.

The observing crowd was abuzz with excitement, their eyes widened in anticipation. This was a matchup they wanted to see, the clash between a Demon Duke and one of Belial's commanders promised to be a spectacle unlike any other.

Whispers filled the air as the venue became alive with murmurs of speculation and envy. Even Oswell had put down the plates of food and glanced towards the array.

Duke Megera strode forward, his aura crackling with raw power. Across from him, the General of Jealousy, a formidable commander with bulging muscles decked in sturdy scales and twisted thorns, stepped forth.

The atmosphere grew tense as the two powerhouses faced each other, their determination radiating like a palpable force. There was a reason why Megera chose to face the General of Jealousy.

The latter was not only the strongest commander among the three, but he also seemed to be from a powerful race probably a race that was [S] rank. Even if he lost, he could at least keep his face in the fact that the commander he faced was the strongest one.

"Commence"

With those words from Belial, the battle started with a thunderous clash. The ground shook, the sky rumbled and the space was torn asunder as the General of Jealousy unleashed a devastating series of blows, each strike aiming to crush Duke Megera's defences.

The Demon Duke, being a high ranking demon, proved to be an agile and formidable opponent, his movements fluid and precise, evading the onslaught with calculated grace.

His counter attacks were equally swift. Duke Megera retaliated with a barrage of powerful attacks, channelling his formidable mystical energy and lost tier skills into each strike. The clash of their

attacks was so powerful that the shockwaves even reached the venue, when the battleground was far away from here.

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Hoh, they are going at it for real" Oswald commented, his eyes shining with a little interest "Though it's a shame that we won't get to see the real power of the General of Jealousy".

Simon nodded his head in pity too. If he could just see the full strength of one of the three commanders he would have a full gauge of their strength and what they can do. However, there was no way they would be shown that.

As Oswald had mentioned before, the Demon Lord of Envy must have ordered his commanders not to reveal their most powerful skills. Though that said, from the battle that was being shown, it was still possible to make some assumptions.

Simon reckoned that the strength of the Demon Duke who was going all out was equal to or lower than any one of the Valkyries. Whereas, the strength of the General of Jealousy surpassed the Valkyries... that is when they not in their racial forms.

Although Simon cannot say it for sure without using the [Appraisal] on the other, but he believed that the General of Jealousy was around level 800 or at the very least near it. If he included all the three commanders and the legion they commanded, the new demon lord was a force to reckon with.

Simon was shocked; however, the shock he received wasn't to that extent he thought he would. Did he overestimate the demon lord?

When he saw Belial's forces, Simon wasn't that impressed for some reason. It was not like he was looking down on the Demon Lord of Envy or anything, if he had to say it he expected more from the demon who was crowned as the Demon Lord.

Being the Demon Lord of Envy, Simon expected the other party to be strong beyond belief. However, the truth appeared to be a little different. What Simon didn't know was that due to the merger of the two options and the presence of the factors like the Fragment of Pride, Forest Spring Spiirts, Null Elemental and others, his dungeon was growing at a ridiculous speed.

The shock that he thought he would receive might have been dulled by the subordinates around him and the encounters he had so far.

Irene, Adalinda, Lucine and the woman in the Historia that he witnessed, all of them were beings of enormous power. Even now, he had two beings around him whose levels were around the upper 800s.

What one must realise is that not all demons get to have the same experience as him or in that matter even come in contact with super powerful beings that rarely showed their face to the world.

Simon might be an exception among the exception. Even while being a low leveled, small fry demon, he not only encountered one or two of them, he even went on a journey with them.

Given his extra eventful life, it was natural that he would be a little numb when seeing a force that would otherwise make even some Demon Archdukes shudder.

Being individuals of immense strength, the battle between the General of Jealousy and the Demon Duke Megera waged on for days. It was a battle of epic proportions, capable of overturning dozens of kilometres of land and changing the topography permanently.

Magic clashed against magic, skills clashed against skill, just when the fight seemed to be coming to a stalemate, the tide turned in the favour if General of Jealousy abruptly.

His sheer strength and resilience pushed Duke Megera to his limits. But the Duke, fueled by his ambition and determination, refused to relent. With a rumbling sound of mystical energy, he unleashed a devastating onslaught, striking at the General with all his might.

The observing demons held their breath, their eyes locked on the spectacle unfolding before them. The clash of powers, the dance of ambition and the might of one of the three commanders, held them in a trance-like state.

They marvelled at the resilience and strength displayed by both combatants. In the end, on the night of the third day despite Duke Megera's valiant efforts, the General of Jealousy proved to be the victor.



The final blow landed, the Demon Duke puked out a mouthful of blood and was sent plummeting down to the depth of the earth, where they created a huge crater and laid there on a pool of their own blood.

Even if the demon duke could quickly regenerate from those wounds and rejoin the battle, it was clear that he was no match for the commander.

The other party sustained no damage during their entire battle. What's more, from the beginning to the end of the battle, the General of Jealousy was entirely in control.

Duke Megera was sold, he had used his full power and had gone all out yet he couldn't even scratch the other party despite them concealing a portion of their powers. As such, he knew that continuing this battle will only be a waste of time.

Thus... "I give up".

Duke Megera admitted defeat.

"That's enough, the victor has been decided. Both of you stand down" Beilial's voice echoed across the land.

Jealousy obediently nodded his head and backed off, leaving the duke to crawl out of the pit he created looking all miserable.

The audience who watched the entire battle through the Distance Viewing Array, stood in stunned silence, their eyes wide with shock and disbelief. The clash between Duke Megera and the General of Jealousy had been a sight to behold, a display of power and skill that had surpassed all expectations.

Yet, despite the Duke's formidable abilities, he had fallen short in the face of the commander's overwhelming might.

A hushed murmur swept through the crowd, a mixture of awe, surprise, and fear. Envy filled their hearts as they witnessed the power of the commanders of Belial.

A sense of trepidation grabbed hold of their bodies as they realised that even a Demon Duke, a pinnacle of power in their own right, had been bested sending a shiver down their spines.

Whispers filled the air as the observing demons exchanged glances, their expressions a blend of admiration and unease. Some muttered words of admiration, recognizing the commanders' unparalleled strength.

Others spoke with a hint of fear, their voices laced with a desperate desire to please the victors.

Belial, Gareth, and the other demons in the same faction, shared a delighted mood. Belial's eyes gleamed with satisfaction, his lips curling into a smug smile. The Demon Lord of Envy reveled in the display of power, his ambitions further stoked by the realization that his commanders were truly unrivaled.

Gareth, the mastermind behind this showcase, wore a satisfied expression, his pride in his son evident.

"I believe all the observers present here are content by the might shown by the three Commanders of Envy? As such, I believe there are no more qualms and doubts regards to the worthiness of my son being crowned as the new demon lord. If there is any demon who disagrees, you are free to challenge any of the commanders. Are there any demons?"

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Although Gareth spoke to the crowd, his words were intended for the others observers who hadn't shown their faces or were peering from the distance.

The place was silent for a while before a few demons stepped forward, their voices trembling with a mixture of fear and sycophantic praise.

"Demon Lord of Envy, Belial.. your commanders are truly unmatched. We bow before their might and envy their power. We have no qualms and accept your rein as the new demon lord from this day forth." they declared, their words laden with both bootlicking flattery and genuine awe.

What a joke, there was no way they would go up and challenge a commander especially after they witnessed the devastating loss of Duke Megera. Their status and reputation was very much precious to them, they had no intentions of throwing it away and become the laughingstock in front of the whole demon world.

There wasn't a single demon noble present in the venue who was still unsatisfied or held any qualms about the new demon lord assuming his position. The defeat of Duke Megera had that much impact on them.

Belial's smirk widened, as he sensed the atmosphere of fear and adulation that surrounded the venue.

"Your words are noted," he replied with a voice dripping with a mix of superiority and indulgence.

"My fellow demons, worry not for this power is not meant to be exercised on our own kind. Today was just but a reminder to all the demons and to show my predecessors that I am worthy of my title".

In the demon world, might was law. The one who had the bigger fist was right. Therefore, the demons in the venue erupted into applause, their eyes flashing with a newfound respect for the demon lord.

Belial had not only proven his own worth, but had ignited a fire within the hearts of all who bore witness to his power presentation. It was a moment that would forever be etched into the annals of demonic history.

From this day forward, none would dare challenge his supremacy, for they had witnessed the undeniable might of his forces and the envy it inspired.

"It looks like the fight with Megera was enough to shut them up" Gareth, ever the astute observer, nodded approvingly, his eyes glinting with a blend of satisfaction and pride.

The fear and astonishment that permeated the venue pleased him greatly, it reaffirmed his belief in the power of his son and the commanders of Envy. Although still a little lacking, but with his and the support from his faction, it wouldn't be a problem for Belial to assume his new role.

And so, the power presentation drew to a close, the Hexennacht venue remained in a state of silent reverence. The grandeur of Belial's forces, his vast wealth, and the strength of his commanders had left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of many who bore witness to it.

That said, even though the power presentation had come to a close, the Hexennacht was far from over. If anything the real matters of the Hexennacht was about to start.

The event was paused for a bit for the attendees to clear their minds with the music and the treats prepared for them. After a while, as the echoes of the power presentation subsided, the atmosphere within the venue shifted.

The time for discussing the pressing matters of the Hexennacht had arrived. Demons of various ranks and stations gathered around, their attention focused on the matters that threatened to disrupt the peace of their dominion and plagued every demonkind.

At the centre of the discussion stood Belial, the Demon Lord of Envy. His expression was composed and commanding as he presided over the gathering with a presence that radiated authority.

Seated nearby was Gareth, the cunning Archduke and also the father of Belial. Other than him, there was also the Demon Archduke Agares, Boros, Goliath and Orca. With all the demons present, the Hexennacht officially convened.

The atmosphere turned sombre and focused. On a side note, Duke Megera who had recovered from the damage he suffered from his fight against the General of Jealousy, had also rejoined the event. Though it couldn't be said that he was in a very good mood after his humiliating defeat.

"Alright, everyone.. Let us start this event with the most pressing matter at hand".

Belial clapped his hands and a Demon Duke subordinate from his faction, stepped out. They took out a big parchment of paper from their space ring and spread it open on top of a table at the centre of the venue.

As all the eyes shifted towards the paper, they realised that it was a map though not just any map, but the map of the entire Demon Continent.

Belial, the Demon Lord of Envy, rose from his seat, and gazed at the gathered demons with his piercing violet eyes. With a commanding and resonant voice that pierced through the air, he spoke.

"Fellow demons, the humans have made significant inroads into our territories in these past few centuries, building air routes and teleportation gates. Their presence had no doubt allowed us to amass great wealth and resources and has helped us grow stronger".

"However, this has also opened the demon continent to the humans. Their relentless pursuit of power threatens to destabilize our dominion and shatter the delicate balance we have maintained for aeons..."

The first topic that was discussed in the Hexennacht was the significant number of dungeons conquered by the humans in the past couple of centuries. Whispers of concern echoed through the venue, each word a testament to the demons' growing unease.

"Are the humans trying to break the treaty? Did they forget the significant losses they suffered in the ancient wars?"...

"Hmph, they are blatantly disregarding the agreement, so why should we follow it too? Let's show those humans diving inside out dungeon that all their transgressions would be punished"...

"Are you all insane? We cannot be the first ones to break the treaty. We the demon race are already imposed with several sanctions and repercussions. To this day, we aren't allowed to step foot openly on the central Continent. If on top we are the first ones to break the treaty, the consequences will be extremely dire. You do whatever you want to do with your own dungeon, but do not drag all of us into it"...

"Heh, the era of peace has made you a coward and a wuss who only knows how to sit back inside his dungeon and hide. I am ashamed as a fellow demon noble to know that someone as gutless as you exist among us. Since when did we the race of demon nobles fear anyone? So what if we incur 'their' wrath if we break the treaty? I say bring it on. This peace is nothing but a façade and this treaty that was forcefully imposed on us is extremely prejudiced against us while favouring the other party"..

"I agree with him, all those rules in the treaty are clearly meant to restrain us"...

"You all have gone insane. Do you think this is still the ancient era? Even the Demon lords of now have to be respectful to 'them', who do you think you are..."

The opinions of the crowd were clearly divided, one side wanted to punish the humans and talked about breaking the treaty, while the other side was against taking action against the humans since they were afraid of suffering any loss.

"Hey, why are they fighting over such a common issue? I didn't think that the race of demon nobles who only seek their own self interest would discuss about matters that didn't even concern them"

Simon who was attending the Hexennacht for the first time, didn't understand why such a matter would concern all the demon kind.

It was not unusual for a dungeon to be conquered, in fact, such cases occurs many times over a decade. Of course, in all of those cases, it is the low tier dungeons that are created by low ranking demons such as Demon Earl and Demon Viscount that gets conquered.

There are hardly if any cases where an intermediate tier dungeon gets conquered. So why were these demon nobles so riled up?

"You are right, we the race of demon nobles aren't united, we are all motivated by our interests and hardly show any care for what happens to others. However, you are wrong about one thing".

"This is a serious matter that concerns all of us Demon Nobles. Since you haven't attended the previous Hexennacht, you might not know it, but this issue has been raised because it is not the low ranking or intermediate ranking dungeons that have been conquered, but a genuine high ranking dungeon belonging to a powerful Demon Duke". Oswald explained.

"What?"...

"You heard that right, the adventurers managed to conquer an [A] rank dungeon. It is a shocking matter; however, it wouldn't cause all of us demons to be so riled up. The reason why some demons are even going as far as to say they would break the Treaty, was because it's not just one high ranking dungeon that got conquered but three of them".

"What's more astonishing is that all three dungeons were ruled by powerful Demon Dukes who had lived for more than 2000 years. Naturally, the force that they had amassed was equally formidable, yet all of them got destroyed in the last three decades. Something like this hasn't occurred over a millennium. Naturally, an issue like that would be raised in the Hexennacht".

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Simon who heard that it was a high ranking dungeon and not an intermediate or low dungeon that got conquered, was surprised. However, his surprise changed into pure dumbfoundedness when he heard that it was not just one, but three of the high ranking dungeons that got conquered.

It needs to be mentioned that a high ranking dungeon cannot be compared to a low or intermediate tier dungeon. They are called high rank for a reason, they stand at the top of other dungeons and possess formidable and longstanding power that are a testament to their complexity.

These high ranking dungeons are born through a slow and arduous process of maturation and evolution. The path from an intermediate-tier dungeon to a high-ranking dungeon is a long and gruelling one, spanning centuries for centuries at the very least.

It is these enduring forces that shape these special realms. The dungeon itself undergoes a metamorphosis, fueled by the accumulation of a vast amount of mystical energies, the infusion of ancient powers, and the imprint of countless battles fought within its depths.

Not only that, the transformation of a high ranking dungeon from an intermediate-tier one is accompanied by a confluence of other factors.

The accumulation of potent magical energies within the dungeon's core serves as a catalyst, triggering the awakening of new sets of dungeon becomes a high ranking one that all the options of the [shop] gets unlocked, making it far more difficult and treacherous Floors, Affluences, Biomes, Environmental Change, Laws, Mutations and other challenges.

If we talk about the [Shop] then there are even more changes to be listed and options that could be installed. It is only after the dungeon becomes a high ranking one that all the options of the [shop] gets unlocked, making it far more difficult and treacherous to tread.

Additionally, the monsters that could be spawned to defend such dungeons are formidable creatures far more powerful than the ones teeming inside the intermediate tier dungeons. Not only do they possess uncanny strength, agility and defence they are also cunning beyond compare.

From massive hulking behemoths to elusive and stealthy assassins, they pose an insurmountable challenge to any adventurer who dares to tread their halls.

The facility of the [Boss Monsters] also gets unlocked at this point. Magical traps, Arrays, Barriers, Constructs, Ancients Sigils... There are so many safeguard systems to protect the dungeon that there is no end to it.

The influence and presence of all these elements is what makes a High ranking dungeons an impenetrable fortress.

Additionally, they are a bastion of power and secrecy, housing the lairs of mighty demon dukes. Demons that are second only to the archdukes in terms of strength and authority, commanding legions of minions and possessing formidable magical prowess.

The fall of a high ranking dungeon should be an impossible endeavour, something that couldn't be imagined easily. Yet, the truth stands before him. Even with all those impossible odds stacked against them, the adventurers managed to conquer said dungeons which stands as a testament to the ultimate power of a demon noble.

The fact that not one, but three of these powerful demon dukes had fallen prey to the onslaught of adventurers was a sobering realization. It shattered the illusion of invincibility that the demon society had held onto for centuries.

Given the gravity of the situation, it was only natural for the demons to become united for this once. After all, If the adventurers could topple powerful demon dukes and conquer high-ranking dungeons, then no demon, no matter how mighty, was safe from their relentless advance.

While the weight of the issue still lingered within the heart of the demons, Belial the Demon Lord of Envy, decided to drop another bomb.

"The duke that has fallen this time, was from my faction. Duke Beleth, his domain the Shadowed Abyss is located in the north-eastern direction of the Demon Continent. The humans had built large teleport gates near his domain that connected with the multiple central kingdoms".

"I had cautioned him multiple times not to let his guard down against these dastardly humans who call themselves adventurers. Yet despite my efforts and warnings, his dungeon had fallen not too long ago".

"What's surprising was that, until the very last moment his dungeon was conquered, none of us were able to sense anything. We received no communication, nothing from him which was unusual because if he was in trouble, he would have sent us a distress call".



"I sent a few of my subordinates and even personally went to the Shadowed Abyss to investigate the situation. However, I found nothing unusual with the ruins of his dungeon other than this".

Belial took out something from his space ring and showed it to the gathering. It was a sound transmission conch and a very high grade one at that, capable of sending transmissions over tens of thousands of kilometres.

"This transmission conch is something I salvaged from the ruins of Beleth's dungeon. Recorded in it are mostly static noise and inaudible words, but there are a few vague sentences that I believe contain the clues to the identity of the suspects involved in this incident".

Belial showed the transmission conch to the audience at Hexennacht before playing it.

"ZZzz... TTZZzzzz.. hold them no matter what, do not let them get to the last floor... TTZZzzz... This is bad... hold longer.. attack. This is Duke Beleth, requesting... TTZZzzz... Adventurers... attacking... fall... monsters...TZZZzzzz"

A static noise echoed out, signalling that this was the end of the transmission.

"This.." many demons wore a look of askance on their face unable to make sense of the audio that they just heard.

From the voice that sounded out, they were sure that it was Duke Beleth; however, there was too much static and interruptions in the transmission that it was hard to make sense of what the duke was trying to say.

"I believe it was a distress call from Beleth requesting for immediate reinforcements from us. However, something had happened to his dungeon that interfered with the sound transmission and stopped it from sending any signals".

"Additionally, though I am not hundred per cent sure, but the last part I believe tells us about the identity of the assailants. Adventurers, attacking, fall and monsters. There is no doubt that it was the doing of the Adventurers since I also found his dungeon core missing, so there is no mistaking it".

"'Attacking' and 'Fall' must mean that his dungeon was attacked and was on the brink of falling. As for the Monsters, I am not too sure but I believe that the monster referred here is not talking about the monsters that we spawn in our dungeon to safeguard it. Duke Beleth must mean something else".

Belial spoke, his voice contained a mix of curiosity and concern.

As the weight of the revelation settled upon the crowd at Hexennacht, a collective gasp swept through the venue like a chilling breeze. The news that something unsettling, something that possessed the power to topple down even the power of a Demon Duke, sent shockwaves of disbelief and fear among the attendees.

Whispers filled the air, spreading the grim tidings like wildfire.

"As I thought so, we need to give an appropriate reply or the humans will think they can do anything they want"...

"Say what? Are you still suggesting we break the treaty first? We cannot stop the humans from entering our land nor can we go into theirs"...

"Silence everyone, this is not the time to argue among ourselves. The treaty is something that cannot be broken no matter what. However, it is also true that we cannot allow these dastardly humans to climb on top of our head dance".

"There will be retaliation. As the demon lord, I promise you all that I shall thoroughly investigate this matter, and a verdict will be reached. However, till then I ask everyone to exercise restraint. Do not under no circumstances be the first one to break the treaty".

Belial spoke, his voice carrying the weight of unsurpassed authority. As his words hung in the air, a hushed silence settled over the venue. The conquest of their cherished dungeons by these dastardly beings was a blow to their pride, a reminder that their dominion was not invincible.

"We must also keep a watchful eye on the Adventurer's Association. Their changing policies and allegiances have the potential to disrupt the delicate balance of power within our dominion. We cannot afford to underestimate the influence they wield."

Gareth, the demon who had lived for over six thousand years, decided to interject with his observation.

The Adventurers' Association, once viewed as a mere nuisance, had grown into a force to be reckoned with.

The audience in the Hexennacht nodded in agreement. They realized that the time for underestimating the adventurers' association had long passed. It was no longer a matter of petty squabbles over territorial disputes or dungeon resources. It was a fight for survival, a battle to protect their dominion, their place to live, and their very existence.

The discussion ensued, whispers of concerns were mumbled, plans were hatched and new alliances were made. The Demon Dukes once divided by their own ambitions and rivalries, now united in the face of a common enemy.

Strategies were devised to fortify their dungeons, to bolster their defences. The lessons learned from the fallen high-ranking dungeons were etched deep into the consciousness of the demon society.

While all of this was happening, Simon was deliberating something inside his head. The matter was of course about the adventurers. However, he was still wondering about the incomplete message the Demon Duke named Beleth left behind.

He couldn't get the last word that the duke said off of his mind.

'Adventurers... attacking... fall... monsters...' What did he mean by that?

Monsters... there was something about this word that struck Simon. A memory from a few years ago couldn't help but surface in his mind once again.

Chapter 675- The Treaty

It was during the time his dungeon was breached by a coalition of adventurers led by the guild named Seven Swords Guild. Simon had just completed the fourth trial in the forbidden grounds and had arrived in his dungeon, only to get that news.

Of course, their attempt was met with a failure, as Simon did not spare anyone and wiped all of them out or took them as convicts to be questioned and later killed except for one, that guy managed to escape.

There was one person among the lot who had intruded his dungeon pretending to be under the coercion of the Sea God's Guild and observed the entire spectacle while hiding as Simon wiped out their entire party.

That guy who called himself Bryan or 007 a senior executive of some organisation called as Cerberus was able to hide from the surveillance of the dungeon. Assuming that it was a skill that was developed by the Adventurer's Association to tackle the dungeons as said by Davis Hall, that guy also possessed another peculiar ability.

He was able to transform into some monstrous being with furs all over his body and elongated arms. Not only that, but after he transformed into that form, his stats, energy, skills all seemed to have risen drastically.

Although he had managed to escape thanks to a powerful spatial artefact, he still left an impression on Simon who couldn't help but wonder if there was any connection with the monster Duke Beleth spoke about.

Cerberus huh?! Simon took out a badge from his space ring. It was a badge that depicted a three headed infernal hound called the Cerberus.

This badge was given to him by Bryan saying that there would come a time in the future when they would have to work together. The other party had also invited him into his ranks; however, he had rejected it.

Simon didn't know what the objective of this organisation was, but one thing was certain... this organisation always moved in the shadows. It would be too soon to discount the involvement of Cerberus in the fall of so many high ranking dungeons.

'Seems like I will have to fortify my dungeon and raise its rank as soon as possible' Simon came to a decision.

Being a demon Earl who had created his own dungeon, the fall of the high ranking dungeons also concerned him. It could be said that his dungeon was relatively safe and fortified right now. However, who could say about the future?

If even High ranking dungeon wasn't safe, much less needs to be said about a [C] rank intermediate tier dungeon. In his case, if not for his capable subordinates his dungeon, Laplace might have fallen years ago.

Be it private guilds or Adventurer's Associations that managed them, they cannot be underestimated. Not only had they created so many new skills and machines like the Floor Buster to tackle the dungeon, who knew what else they had in store?

If the demon nobles continued to underestimate the adventurers, it been diving inside the dungeons for thousands of years. Naturally, we have amassed some knowledge over the years and passed it wouldn't be too long before they get the rug pulled from under them.

"Haha, you shouldn't be that surprised demon. Us human race has been diving inside the dungeons for thousands of years. Naturally, we have amassed some knowledge over the years and passed it down from generation to generation. To counter the dangers of the dungeon, we have created many new skills and artefacts. The mask, that I used, the machine behind me and the skills Edgar used are just some of our latest inventions".

Simon recalled the words that Davis Hall, an officer of the Adventurer's Association had said to him once.

The humans have evolved and learned a whole lot since the ancient times. The knowledge that they inherited and passed from generation to generation became the strength of the ones of this era.

The current generations of humans were quite innovative in that they have come up with a new and different method of exploring dungeons. The Floor Buster for example was able to catch Simon who had made the mistake of underestimating the adventurers, by surprise.

It destroyed all of his plans and traps that he had set for them and ultimately forced him to come out and face them himself ahead of his plans.

If they can create something that goes unnoticed from the radars of the dungeon and havemachines that can breach through floors and many more, who is to say that they cannot isolate a dungeon and conquer it before the other demons even get an inkling?

The alliance and pacts that the demon nobles are creating under the façade of self interest, will not help them. This temporary unity will soon crumble away and collapse when more dungeons start falling and the selfishness of the demons are laid bare.

At that time, the alliance would hold no meaning and become an empty word.

"Hey, my best friend what are you thinking so intently? Are you that worried about your dungeon? You look quite stiff, relax a little. Don't be overly worried and push yourself to the edge. If you do, you won't find any solution" Oswald commented glancing at Simon who was lost in his own world.

Should I tell him about this? Simon deliberated. Oswald was someone who had a good relationship with him, the latter had also helped him out during the journey. As such, telling him about what he knew didn't seem a bad idea.

In fact, the other party might also be in possession of useful information. If they could share their information with each other, it would benefit them mutually.

And so, Simon told Oswald all that he knew about the Adventurer Associations and their new inventions. After hearing what Simon had to say, a rare seriousness descended onto Oswald's face.

"I see so your dungeon too has experienced those inventions of theirs huh? As a matter of fact, a few months ago my dungeon too was assaulted by a group of adventurers who used peculiar means and gadgets to dive deeper into the dungeon".

"In my case, they used a peculiar machine that could generate poisonous smoke that can kill or render most monsters unconscious. But this Floor Buster you say is something else. If they have really perfected that machine, then even the higher ranking dungeons are not safe. Be it this or that, it looks like the dungeon exploration has entered a new era"

He spoke with a grim voice. A machine that could render the monsters inside the dungeon unconscious and a machine that could breach through floors would scare any demon.

That said, now that they were aware of the new inventions and the way the dungeon exploration is going to change in the future, they could prepare their dungeon appropriately for it.

Simon and Oswald continued to share the information they knew about the adventurers and amidst their discussion, the topic of the treaty inadvertently arrived.

What was this treaty the demon nobles were talking about? Why were they so afraid of it? After becoming a Demon Earl, the memories of the world he inherited became a little more complete.

However, this knowledge was still beyond his rank. Although he had heard about some treaty from Cecilia once. However, how much could a ten to eleven year child who has never stepped foot away from her village, know?

"Right, let me tell you about this treaty that shackles us Demon nobles and many other clans likewise. In the annals of ancient history, there exists a treaty that stands as a testament to the resilience and wisdom of the races that inhabit the realms".

"This treaty, forged in the wake of the cataclysmic Second Apex War sought to restore balance and foster harmony between the clans that had been ravaged by conflict. It was around the time when the chaos led to unfettered ambition and ruthless exploitation of Many rare and extraordinary clans, whose very bodies held treasures beyond imagination".

"They became the targets of greed and desperation. These extraordinary clans possessed physical attributes and abilities that were the envy of all. There were those whose blood ran with ancient magic, granting them unimaginable powers, and those whose bodies could regenerate even the gravest of wounds and some whose orbs could allow one to purify their bloodline and help them reach new heights of power and level".

As Oswell spoke till here, Simon could more or less understand what happened next. In this lawless vacuum, those with power sought to dominate and control these rare clans. They were subjected to relentless pursuit, their freedom stripped away, and their lives reduced to mere commodities.

Captured and confined, they were traded like objects, their unique attributes harnessed for personal gain or sold to the highest bidder. Cecilia's clan, the Forest Spring Spirits was just one of them.

Oswell continued: "It was amidst this backdrop of desperation and despair that the Dragon Lords emerged as beacons of hope. These supreme and noble beings, revered for their wisdom, power, and unyielding sense of justice, recognized the dire need for stability and order".

"They sought to restore balance to all the continents and protect those who were vulnerable to exploitation. The treaty itself was a laborious endeavour, meticulously crafted over years of negotiations, concessions, and diplomatic manoeuvrings".

"It punished any and all clans who were playing a part of subjugators and imposed heavy sanctions and rules on them. And the race of Demon Nobles was one of them who played a proactive role in all of this. Many of our rights were ceased, our influence censored and we were confined to this land forever unable to step out".

#### Chapter 676- Secret Dealing

"The race of demon nobles was confined to the demon continent. The consequences of ever breaking it would be disastrous. Of course, the humans who were equal perpetrators in all of this if not more, were also appended in the treaty".

"However, compared to the heavy sanctions and rules imposed on the demons, the humans got it easy. The repercussions that they suffered weren't everlasting and with time, they recovered from all those damages".

Oswell glanced at Simon and seeing his perplexed look, he clarified. "I know what you are thinking. If the humans and demon nobles were an equal perpetrators in all of this mayhem, then why were the human race not penalised equally? Why did they come out of this treaty relatively better than the Demon Nobles?"

"The reason for that was simple. At that time, four of our demon lords had fallen, the primordial Demon Lord of Sloth was gravely injured and Wrath refused to join in all of this. He had completely given up on the world and was unconcerned about what happened to the race of Demon Nobles".

"No matter how powerful she is, lady Lilith alone couldn't defy the powerful Dragon Lords and the coalition of other mighty clans. As such, our race of Demon Nobles even though unwilling, had to accept the short end of the stick. Whereas, the race of humans got lucky. Although they too had suffered disastrous losses, a new beacon of hope, the Seraphim of Chastity appeared amongst them and led the race of humans to a new dawn. As the result of the Seraphims' intervention, they were spared from suffering heavy impositions".

So that is why, Simon nodded his head, one of his doubts was cleared now.

"Anyways, thanks to the treaty's provisions that laid the foundation for lasting peace, boundaries were established, demarcating the territories of each clan and race, ensuring a delicate equilibrium that allowed for coexistence and cooperation".



"Economic agreements were forged, fostering mutual benefit among the signatories. And most crucially, a framework for dispute resolution and mediation was established, preventing conflicts from escalating into all-out war. The treaty also recognized the role of the Dragon clans as the custodians of the realms' balance. With their ancient wisdom and immeasurable power, they were tasked with upholding the treaty's tenets, and serving as impartial judges and enforcers".

"Their presence served as a constant reminder to all signatories of the consequences that awaited those who dared to defy the peace. As time passed, the treaty became ingrained in the fabric of our world. Thus creating the era that was now".

Oswell took a pause here and glanced at Simon: "I could keep on talking about the treaty; however, with this you should have a basic understanding of what this treaty is and why some of the demons are unwilling to breach it".

"However, the actions of the humans are a testament of the fragility of the treaty. This delicate peace is nothing but a deception. Chaos is still present in the world, fights and battles are still fought everywhere under the guise of politics and clans being subjugated hidden from the eyes of the dragon clans".

"As new generations are rising to power, the memories of the Second Apex War are beginning to fade, and of course, the once old rivalry is threatening to resurface once again. Even I am unable to predict which direction the world will shift from this point on".

"However, what I am clear is that, the times are starting to change. We the race of Demon Nobles no longer hold the advantageous position due to the treaty. If the demon nobles continue to maintain their current self indulgence, we are sure to fall sooner or later".

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In a realm veiled in darkness, where the boundaries between worlds grew thin, a figure slowly walked forward. The figure had the head of a goat, half of his face was skeletal and one could see the muscles and veins spasming through it.

They had long twisting thorns, razor sharp teeth and peculiar crossed eyes with ring shaped patterns. They had a pale purple skin and wore a black hood over. Their arms were long and thin and held a weird staff that was made of bones. A pungent smell of corpse wafted off from them.

The figure was none other than the Merchant of the Damned, Grimvul.

TAK... TAK... As he walked forward, in this ominous dark world, the sound of his footsteps echoed through the expanse of this place.

"Merchant of the damned, my lord has been expecting you".

Suddenly, an old voice sounded out, the darkness shifts and an old man stood waiting in front of the merchant. If Simon was here, he would have immediately recognised the old man with a serene look Auction of the Damned.

and having orbs like nebulas surrounding him while levitating a few feet off the ground, as the old hermit he had seen back in the Auction of the Damned.

"ShiShiShi... So he saw through my arrival huh, as expected of that being. Lead me to him, I have a piece of news that being would definitely want" Grimvul spoke, flashing his wretched smile.

Acknowledging the merchant's request, the old man nodded and led him deeper through a series of labyrinthine paths and in front of a grand chamber that loomed like a colossal beast before them.

The chamber, bathed in an eternal twilight, was an embodiment of ancient dread and unfathomable power. Its immense size stretches beyond the boundaries of one's eyesight.

The walls here were made of an eerie material with pulsating veins running along its sides. The pillars supporting the place rise to towering heights, disappearing into the dark depths above.

Ancient glyphs and symbols, etched with precision and purpose, were carved along the walls as if recording the secrets lost to time.

The air within the chamber was heavy with the weight of ages, suffused with a chilling aura that sends shivers down the spines of even the most stalwart souls. An unnatural silence pervaded the place.

In the distance, a faint glow like an ember emanates from a series of torches strategically placed throughout the chamber. Their ethereal flames cast flickering shadows upon the chamber's vast expanse, painting macabre images upon the walls.

The flickering light dances with the darkness, creating an eerie chiaroscuro.

At the centre of the chamber, elevated upon a dais of obsidian, rests a throne. Carved with intricate detail, the throne seemed to meld seamlessly with the encroaching darkness, its jagged edges and sinuous curves evoking a sense of unease.

Seated upon the throne was an enormous and shadowy figure emanating a palpable aura of power and darkness. Their form was obscured, shrouded in a cloak of obsidian hues that seem to drink in the very light around them. Only the gleam of their glowing eyes burning intensely could be seen penetrating through that cloak.

As the Merchant and the old man approached near, the chamber fell into an eerie stillness. Whispers of ancient incantations and infernal rituals echo through the air, as if paying homage to the shadowy figure upon the throne.

"Master I brought the merchant. He came here as you had foretold, it looks like he has some kind of news for you" The old man spoke respectfully towards the figure seated on the throne.

The ancient incantations and the echo of chants stopped, the shadowy figure turned its gaze toward the Merchant. Their eyes glowing with an otherworldly light pierced through the darkness as if they held the weight of tens of thousands of years and could see through all kinds of deception.

Feeling the gaze upon him, the merchant of the damned realised once again that he stands before a being of immense power and knowledge, a figure who has witnessed countless rise and falls of the world, and who holds the strings that bind fate itself.

A being of unparalleled significance, and power that could not only shape the destiny of the entire Demon Continent, but all of Althaea.

In front of that being even Grimvul had to bow his head in deference.

"Speak Grimvul, why did you come to my domain? Are you tired of living or did you come here bringing some good news for me? Speak, do not waste my time".

A voice resonated through the chamber, deep and commanding, as if the very fabric of reality could be bent to the speaker's will.

"Oh primordial one, I have come bearing some good news. The information relating to that thing you are searching for, I have it with me. However, before I pass this information to you, I have two simple requests of you" Grinvul requested.

"Speak"..

The merchant of the damned steadied himself so as to not show any fear in front of the figure and made his requests.

"My first request is that in exchange for the value of the information that I'm about to provide you, I want something of equal significance".

Shadowy figure: "So, the Merchant of the Damned seeks my possessions, how amusing. You stand before me trembling, yet you make such demands? Alright, I grant this request. If the information you have is of great value to me, I shall provide you with something with equal value. Now, make your second request".

Grinvul continued "My second request is that you guarantee my life. During my time here and when I leave this place, I want you to guarantee that no one will harm me".

The ancient shadow, seated upon the throne, gazed deeply at Grinvul with a penetrating intensity as if he was angered.

Chapter 677- Secret Dealing (2)

"Do not mistake your arrival here as a mere coincidence, Grinvul. I, who dwell within the shadows of this world, have long foreseen your presence in my domain. How else did you think you were able to arrive here, at my doorstep without any interruptions? Your purpose and intentions were unveiled to me through the veils of time and space".

The Merchant of the Damned shivers in unease feeling the gaze. He instantly realised that he had made a mistake and apologised for his words while struggling to maintain his composure and fighting the creeping tendrils of fear that threaten to consume him.

"P-Please quell your anger O primordial one, your foresight and divination are truly awe inspiring. It humbles me to stand before you, knowing that my arrival was foreseen by your ancient wisdom. I am but a humble merchant, driven by the desire to possess materialistic things".

The shadowy figure's silence seemed to stretch on, as if contemplating something. Eventually, a nod of assent, almost imperceptible, emanates from the depths of the darkness that surrounded the throne.

"Alright, I guarantee your life until you leave my domain. No one shall harm you during this time, my words are absolute. Now speak, what is this information that you have for me".

Grimvul sighed a breath of relief, he felt like a great weight had been removed from his shoulders, like a convict who has been granted amnesty. With those words from the shadowy figure, he was relieved, there was no way any harm can come to him now.

"O primordial one, the information that I'm about to tell you is of great importance to you. I have traced the echoes of the fragments that you are looking for to the farthest reaches of the different worlds and have finally discovered them."

"The greater constellation that has been lying dormant since time immemorial, is starting to shine once again. Its divine will has formed once again and has chosen a different wielder this time".

Hearing the words of the merchant, the intense glow in the eyes of the shadowy figure fluctuated for a fraction of a second.

"You don't mean...".

"Yes, the fragments of Pride have formed once again".

The moment Grimvul confirmed that, it was as if something unnoticeable, something mighty and unfathomable was unleashed. It spread through the entire domain and beyond like a tremor causing unnatural phenomena in the outside world.

"Merchant of the Damned are you certain? If this is one of your trickery, this old man will be the one to end your life".

The old man beside Grimvul spoke in the gravest of tone. Trickery in front of his master was an offence that cannot be pardoned.

"Hmph, I'm not so foolish as to do something like that in front of the one who has lived through the primordial times. What I say is the truth. The Fragments of Pride has formed once again and have chosen a wielder. I have witnessed their emergence in the world of Althaea" Grimvul snorted asserting his words.

"Ever since the primordial times, there has only ever been one who has been recognised and chosen by the Fragments of Pride. Ever since their demise, the greater constellation had forever been dead, its divine will never manifesting again".

"That is to say, the Fragments of Pride vanished from Althaea forever. However, you say that it has not only formed once again, but has also chosen a different wielder. If your words are to be believed, then you truly have brought me a great news".

"Master, are you really believing what this Merchant has to say? This being cannot be..." The old man was still sceptical. However, before he could complete his sentence, a voice that carried absolute authority, silenced him.

"Silence, I'm not done talking. Merchant Grimvul continue, tell me everything that you know".

Grimvul nodded his head and continued to relay the unfathomable revelation.

"O primordial one, I have witnessed it with my own eyes. The fragments of pride thought to be lost to the annals of history, have once again chosen a wielder. A Demon Earl who came to attend my auction".

"Although he had kept it hidden marvellously, it was clear that he has no idea of what the Fragments he possessed are and is unable to control its powers and aura. I'm not lying, he should be currently attending the Hexennacht. If the primordial one doesn't trust me, he can send someone to check on him".

The silence in the air hangs heavily as the shadowy figure's form seemed to shift, their immense presence filling the chamber with an undeniable aura of dread and anticipation.

"Your revelation is truly shocking and defies all logic. A Demon Earl chosen as a wielder? Why would the Fragments of a greater constellation choose such an insignificant demon who is not even an ancient Archduke?"

"However, it doesn't appear that you are lying to me. If that Demon Earl is unaware of the powers of the fragments and has never used any of its [Authority], it's no wonder that I was unable to sense it".

"Good..good, you have brought me a piece of great news. The value of this information of yours is truly incomparable, as a reward, I shall give you something that I believe will be worth your trouble" The shadow finger extended his hands and a small dark orb floated from their hands towards Grimvul.

"This is!!" The latter immediately recognised what this item was.

"As expected of the Merchant of the Damned who has traded over millions of items. Your knowledge over artefacts is truly worthy of admiration".

Grimvul bowed his head and thanked the shadowy figure. This item here was worth all the risk he had to taken to come all the way over here.

"My business here is done, O primordial one, it was a pleasure doing business with you, I hope we have many such opportunities like this in the future" Grimvul bid goodbye and made his way out of their domain.

With his life personally guaranteed by the master of this place, he met no trouble on the way and exited the place safe and sound.

Back inside the chamber, the old man gazes at the shadowy figure with a mix of curiosity and concern. His voice was laced with a touch of skepticism as he addresses his master, seeking clarification and understanding.

"Master, do you truly believe the words of that merchant Grimvul? Was it wise to bestow upon him the Prison of Darkness? You have always been cautious and mistrustful of others, even your own subordinates."

The shadowy figure leaned back upon its throne, their eyes still gazing in the direction where Grimvul disappeared to as if piercing through the walls and boundaries of this realm.

"You know me well, old friend. Trust is a luxury I cannot afford. However, there was a glimmer of possibility within Grimvul's words, a hint of truth that resonated with the whispers of fate. Hence, I gave him that item".

"Of course, there is no way I will give away an item as precious as that, I have marked the Prison of Darkness with my Sigil, now no matter where he goes as long as he has that item with him I can always track him back".

"I see...Then should we send someone to attack him as soon as he steps out of your domain?" The old man asked.

"How would it make me look if I were to go back on my words? The Prison of Darkness is important, we cannot just let Grimvul take it away; however, there is no reason for us to personally take action to retrieve it..".

"You mean to say..." The old man realised what his master's intentions were.

"Right, give this information to Asmodeus. He has been searching for a chance to track Grimvul. I'm sure he will gladly accept our offer".

"I see, Master. Your wisdom and foresight are unparalleled. By using Asmodeus, you will not only be able to kill Grimvul without going back on your words, but by giving this information to them you will also retrieve the item and make a good impression on them".

The old man nodded, his eyes reflecting a mixture of understanding and admiration for his master's calculated approach.

"Haha... old friend I shall leave the matter of Prison of Darkness to you. Employ all kinds of means and forces if necessary" The shadowy figure spoke rising from their throne.

"Master, forgive my boldness, but are you intending to go somewhere?" the old man posed a question.



The shadowy figure with their visage obscured by darkness, turned their attention to the old man, a glint of determination flickering within those eyes.

"Indeed, old friend. There is someone that I must meet, a being of immense power and foresight, someone who dwells in the memories of the past. They possess the knowledge and discernment that I need to see through fate, someone that can confirm the existence of the Fragments of Pride".

"Master you don't mean the First If so then let me come with you. If that person decides to attack, even for you it will be hard to fend them off" With a voice filled with a little trepidation, the old man proposed.

However, the shadowy figure shook its head. "I'm going there by disguising all my powers and appearance. If I bring you along with me, it would be like announcing to the whole world my identity. We cannot let others get any inkling of our activities".

Chapter 678- Territorial Feud

"As such, I will be going alone. Besides it's not like we are going to fight. From the truth I unveiled from the whispers of fate, I can tell that person will not start a fight with me".

With a subtle gesture, the shadowy figure conjured a swirling vortex of mystical energy, ripping through the fabric of space. The air crackled with raw power as a spatial gate materialized before them. A shimmering portal to an unknown place lies ahead.

"Old friend... I leave this place to you. With the fragments of Greed, Envy and Gluttony each choosing their new wielders and appearing to descend at this moment, I must ascertain whether the Fragments of Pride have once again appeared in Althaea or not. There is no time to waste, the future that I envisioned, our plan is so near completion..."

The shadowy figure spoke, a flicker of intrigue and excitement could be sensed from their tone.

"In that case, I hope Master employs necessary caution when dealing with that person. Before you leave, I wanted to ask if we should send someone to Hexennacht to ascertain Grimvul's words?"...

The shadowy figure who was about to disappear into the spatial gate, halted their stride and looked back.

"Hexennacht huh? Isn't it Gareth's time to host the event this year?".

"You are right master; however, Gareth has instead relented this opportunity to his son Belial, the one chosen by the Fragments of Envy" The old man reported.

"Hoh his son huh? To think that little boy's son would be chosen by Envy... very amusing. That said, there is no need to send anyone, all my powerful subordinates are currently busy. If I send someone else, that boy Gareth will be able to sense them. Let those children play their house for now".

Leaving behind those final words, the shadowy figure stepped into the portal disappearing into a realm unknown. The chamber, now devoid of the shadowy figure's formidable presence, echoes with a lingering sense of anticipation and foreboding.

The old man, bowed his head towards the slowly closing spatial gate in silent reverence and left to carry out his master's commands.

In the vast expanse of Althaea, where secrets lie veiled and destinies intertwine, what sorts of consequences this meeting will bring? Only time will reveal the outcome of this fateful quest and the impact it shall have on the delicate tapestry of Althaea's existence.

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In the shadowed halls of demon councils and clandestine gatherings, discussions echoed with concerns, strategies, and fears of an impending conflict. The future of the dungeon conquering system hung in the balance, its fate intertwined with the resolution of the human-demon relations and the preservation of the ancient treaty that had long sustained their realm.

Amidst the fervour of the fall of the high ranking dungeons, the topic of the angels movements emerged, casting a shadow of uncertainty upon the gathering.

If talking about the threats that concerned all the demon nobles, the presence of angels couldn't be discounted. Especially those above the rank of dominion.

"The Angels of Dominion have become increasingly active these days. Their motivations remain shrouded in mystery, but their presence no doubt possesses a great threat to our race".

"Although I do not have any proof, but the movements of the humans in the central continent are definitely related to that empire and the Seraphim that controls it. Through some monitoring and personal networks I was able to find that the Seraphim and the Angels of Dominion that serve him are expanding their territories and invading other kingdoms. While it may be happening in the Central Continent, we cannot discount the fact that their movements would have an impact on us sooner or later".

"My lord, the seraphim that you are talking about could it be..."

"That's right, the Seraphim of Temperance that rose to power more than three thousand years ago. The Empire that he founded slowly expanded its influence and has currently become a behemoth of an existence in the Central Continent".

Belial spoke, his eyes narrowed with a mix of concern and confusion. The Rumors of angels, their movements and intention that were still shrouded in mystery, sent ripples of apprehension through the crowd.

The demons, their eyes filled with a mixture of determination and apprehension, nodded in agreement, recognizing the gravity of the situation.

Seeing the gloomy atmosphere of the gathering, Belial glanced towards Gareth who nodded his head. All these discussions and information he gave forth, was for this moment. The pieces all aligned perfectly just like he had planned, this was his chance—

The perfect opportunity to strike and seal his standing amongst the demon nobles forever.

Belial stepped forward, in this time of unease, his figure became the beacon of hope that the demon nobles needed to lead them.

"Do not falter, my brethren. The angels may be powerful and have their divine blood and celestial powers, but we possess our own unique strengths and innate abilities that they can never truly comprehend".

"For this Hexennacht I have called upon the Demon Archdukes, the Demon Dukes, and all those who hold positions of power and influence in our realm. Together, we shall devise strategies to counter the angels, to safeguard our dominion, and to ensure that the balance of power remains firmly in our grasp."

The disturbances within the two continents were a cause for great unease, and they understood the importance of unity and vigilance in the face of these threats. The demons, their spirits rekindled by Belial's words, exuded a renewed sense of determination.

The position and trust the Demon Lord of Envy held in their hearts increased as they realised that in these dire times, he was the only one who can truly lead them.

And so, by using the factors of uncertainty to his favour, the Demon Lord of Envy, Belial solidified his rule and increased his influence further.

The Hexennacht continued on for days, the issues of humans calling themselves adventurers and angels, both were of grave concerns. As such, under the new demon lord's rule, many new strategies were formed, information shared and networks forged.

Simon watched the entire proceeding like an observer, listening intently to the activities going on all around the world. Since this was his first time attending the Hexennacht and the absence of news or media in this world, it was very difficult to discern the state of affairs happening around the world.

It was only during such momentous gatherings where information are disseminated freely, that one gets a precious glimpse into the broader tapestry of events. Or else, confined within the confines of his dungeon and the encompassing forest, his awareness remained shrouded in blissful ignorance.

And so on the seventh day of the Hexennacht, the topic that Simon had been waiting for and the main reason for his attendance, was finally conferred.

The agenda was the territorial feud, a persistent issue that fueled arguments and war among the demons. Territory, to the demon nobles, was not just a mere expanse of land to claim and conquer. It held far greater significance in their intricate hierarchy and power dynamics.

It represented their domain of influence, their stronghold from which they derived authority, wealth, and status. These resources bolstered their individual strength and provided them with the means to further expand their dominion.

In a realm where strength was revered, territorial control became a tangible manifestation of a demon noble's might and influence. Moreover, territory served as a symbol of dominance and authority over other demons.

It showcased their ability to subjugate and govern lesser ranking demons within their domain, establishing themselves as formidable rulers.

This display of power not only earned them respect among their peers, but also instilled fear and obedience in those who resided within their territories.

In a society where power struggles and alliances were common, demon nobles sought to expand their territories as a means to increase their sphere of influence and solidify their standing among the ruling elite.

A larger territory meant greater control over resources, a stronger foothold in conflicts, and enhanced bargaining power in negotiations. It is because of these reasons that dungeon wars are initiated to assert territorial claims or to destroy the dungeon of the rival demons.

They understood that by doing so, not only are they eliminating any competition, but also snuffing the intention of any potential rivals. As could be seen from the atmosphere inside the venue which underwent a palpable change the moment the topic of territorial disputes was waged.

The once harmonious gathering of demons, became charged with an undercurrent of tension and anticipation. The mention of territorial agendas acted as a catalyst, igniting a fire within the attendees.

Friction simmered beneath the surface, threatening to erupt at any moment. The once friendly exchanges turned into strategic manoeuvrings, with demons subtly positioning themselves and their interests, ready to assert their claims and protect their domains.

The intensity in the room became almost tangible, as each demon sought to make their voice heard.

Two high-ranking demons, who had a long standing grudge against each other for decades of territorial skirmish, rose from their seats unable to hold themselves down any longer. Their eyes locked in a fierce stare-down.

Duke Rhydion, a towering figure with dark wings and a regal air, spoke with a voice that resonated through the venue.

"Demon Lord Belial, Archduke Gareth, I demand recompense for the territories that were wrongfully seized from my domain. The encroachment of Duchess Elysilon's forces has disrupted the delicate balance of power."

Duchess Elysilon, a seductive and formidable Demon Duke with dark coral coloured hair, met Rhydion's gaze with an unwavering determination.

"Duke Rhydion, you speak of balance, yet you fail to acknowledge the expansion of your own dominion at the expense of others. The territories in question rightfully belong to me, and I shall not relinquish them without a fight".

#### Chapter 679- Territorial Feud (2)

The clash of arguments between these two dukes, reverberated through the chamber, their voices laden with centuries of history and deep-seated rivalry.

Accusations and counterclaims filled the air as their subordinates and faction rallied behind them, forming a divided audience, each side fervently defending their chosen duke.

It was not only Duke Rhydion and Duchess Elysilon's sides which were fiercely arguing, but other demon nobles and their faction too.

The venue which was celebrating the formation of new alliances and unity, had now transformed into a battlefield of words and subtle machinations. The friction and electricity that hung in the air served as a constant reminder that no matter how many alliances they forged, at the end of the day, they were demon nobles by birth and would always prioritize their own interest first.

"The Tainted Swamps rightfully falls within the boundaries of my domain. Its dark grounds and twisting rivers have long been under my control, and its resources have fueled my forces for centuries" Duke Rhydion asserted, his voice resonated with an unwavering conviction.

"Hmph, you dare spout lies even in such auspicious gathering and claim what is mine? It looks like you have no shame Duke Rhydion. The land in question is an extension of my territory, blessed by the malevolent energies that have nurtured my dungeon for centuries. Its very essence thrums with my influence, and I will not yield it to your insatiable hunger for power."

As the quarrel escalated, their words took on a sharper edge, slicing through the silence like a double-edged sword. Everywhere you see, the atmosphere inside the venue teetered on the edge of anticipation, a storm ready to unleash its fury.

"You!! What did you say?" Duke Rhydion's face was ashen when slighted in front of the whole crowd like that. How could he a powerful demon duke leading one of the mightiest factions, take this lying down?

"If you are going to be like this, then I have no choice but to declare Dungeon War on you".

Whispers swept through the crowd, as soon as duke Rhydion spoke about declaring war on Duchess Elysilon's dungeon. The tension in the room became palpable like a tangible force that shut every arguing demon nobles up and drew them into the unfolding drama between the two powerful adversaries.

"Do you think I'm afraid of you? Fine, if you want to do things like this, I declare dungeon war on your dungeon too. It is better this way, once I destroy your dungeon, this long standing grudge will also disappear".

Duchess Elysilon unyieldingly stood her ground, her voice carrying a note of defiance.

"Duke Rhydion, the other party seems to be looking down on our Blood Ridge Faction. Let us also join this war"..

"Hmph, do you think our Nightmare Trance faction is just for show. Duchess Elysilon, give us the word, we shall declare war on their faction".

The quarrel had reached a crescendo with more and more demons joining in. With the threat of the dungeon war igniting a fire within them, the other high ranking demon nobles too joined in the bandwagon, ready to assert their dominance over their rivals.

The chaos of war hung in the air like a volatile storm. The room seemed to tremble under the weight of the animosity and the threat of war. Those onlookers who were not in any faction or those like Simon and Oswald, watched the chaotic unfolding with bated breath.

They didn't want to get caught in the chaotic waters of the territorial dispute that had simmered for decades if not centuries, now manifesting in the most ugliest of forms.

Amidst the chaos, the demon archdukes and the Demon Lord of Envy, observed the spectacle with a mixture of concern and intrigue. They recognized the significance of this confrontation and the potential ripples this could send throughout the demon continent.

If they let the argument and the tension to escalate any further, a conflict of great scale would be unavoidable. As such, they have to step in to mediate.

Belial glanced at his father and the other demon Archdukes seated near before nodding his head.

Tensions ran high as the demons in attendance, divided by their faction and interest glared at each other. Just when it seemed like a skirmish was inevitable, Belial raised a hand, calling for order.

"Enough" His voice, steady and commanding, pierced through the charged atmosphere silencing all the demons with his pressure.

"This dispute cannot be solved through bickering and threats of war. Have you all already forgotten the threats that loomed over us and the resolve and the alliances you all made in their wake?"

Belial looked at the crowd, his eyes carried a firmness that brooked no argument "Duke Rhydion, Duchess Elysilon... as two of the oldest demon dukes present, having lived for more than 2000 years. I expected more self control and temperance from you two".

"You all as well, I understand the significance of these territories to each of you. However, we must remember that our true enemy lies beyond our borders. It is the encroachment of the human adventurers, the angels and the rise of their conquests that threatens our very existence".

"It is not the time to bicker with each other and tear ourselves apart. We stand at a crucial juncture in our history where we need to make a stand against the encroaching threats. It is only natural for disputes to arrive when your interests are somehow affected. However, must we settle it through such crude means?"

"But Lord Belial, how can we resolve these disputes when our interests and desires often clash? Are we to abandon our ambitions and cede territory to others?" A demon duke who was unable to take his rival's attempts to cease his territory, spoke up.



"I understand your concerns, my fellow demon. Rest assured, I do not propose relinquishing our interests. Instead, I advocate for a system of diplomacy and negotiation, where compromises can be reached and agreements can be forged. By engaging in open dialogue and by providing hard facts, we can strive for peaceful resolutions that do not involve tearing each other apart."

"But my lord, what about those who refuse to cooperate? What if some demons seek to expand their dominions through force?"

Belial glanced at the demon; no at the whole Hexennacht gathering and declared with a voice full of authority.

"That is why I am here. As the new Demon Lord, I believe it is my duty to lead my fellow Demon brethren. Together with the Demon Archdukes I shall convene and establish a council for mediation. This council will serve as a platform for dialogue, where disputes can be heard, and solutions can be sought. If necessary, I shall not hesitate to act against those whose intention are to threaten the peace and stability of our realm".

The final words from the newly risen Demon Lord of Envy, ceased all discontent and silent arguments going on among the audience. They all nodded their heads agreeing with the demon lord.

The image of a vast infernal horde covering the land like a black carpet and the loss of Duke Megera was still fresh on their mind. The power presentation from the demon lord served both as a caution for enemies and demons alike.

Although Belial said it was a power not meant to be exercised on the fellow demon, they didn't want to be the guinea pig to test it out. What's more, the new Demon Lord also had the support of the Demon Archdukes behind him.

Heck even the two most oldest Demon Dukes among them, Duke Rhydion and Duchess Elysilion, set aside their pride momentarily tempered by the gravity of the situation and acquiesced to Belial's words. Much less needs to be said about other demons.

And so, the murmurs of discontent quieted, and a newfound sense of determination began to replace the chaos that had consumed the venue. The demon nobles setting their differences aside sought out a peaceful resolution with their rivals.

Seeing the gathering, once on the precipice of chaos, now found its footing again, Belial smiled to himself. He who had just recently established himself as the leader of all the demons here, couldn't let his foundation crumble in front of his eyes as such he had to intervene before this territorial dispute escalated into a full-blown faction war.

"Duke Rhydion, Duchess Elysilion, your claims have been heard and shall be thoroughly investigated. Until a verdict is reached, I demand that you both exercise restraint. In the face of impending threats, we must rise above petty disputes and rivalries. It is time to put aside our individual ambitions and forge alliances based on shared survival."

Belial spoke, his words struck a chord among the demons, reminding them of the importance of solidarity in the face of adversity. The newly risen Demon Lord of Envy, had successfully intervened, averting a catastrophic clash and steering the demons towards a path of unity.

Discussions filled the air, as all the demons vied for their words and claims to be heard. Belial heard each and every one of them before deciding on his verdict.

Gareth and the other demon archdukes who watched the whole scene while leaning back on their seats, had a smile on their faces from start to finish. They all grinned at the acute intellect and wits of the new demon lord.

"Elder brother Gareth, I have to say that your son is truly worthy of being chosen by the fragments of Envy. To even find the opportunity in this time of urgency, I have to give it to him" Boros remarked.

"Haha, you are praising him too much. He still has a lot to learn" Gareth shook his head in denial, though his eyes which held satisfaction and delight while glancing at his son said otherwise.

Chapter 680- The Audacious Demon Earl

While it may be true that one of Belial's goals in establishing a council was to settle disputes peacefully, his ultimate objective was far grander and more self-serving.

Possessing a shrewd and calculating mind he saw an opportunity to solidify his position among the demons, to assert himself as a formidable Demon Lord capable of leading and making decisive decisions on the behalf of other demons.

Through his carefully crafted words and actions, he presented himself as the epitome of strength and leadership. He skillfully manipulated the circumstances, channelling the demons' collective fear and uncertainty towards himself, casting an aura of authority and stability around his persona.

The establishment of the peaceful council served as a means to an end, a vehicle through which he could demonstrate his influence and control over the demon society. By positioning himself as the driving force behind the council's decisions, he effectively became the arbiter of power, capable of shaping the fate of the demons according to his own ambitions.

Belial's true objective was not merely to settle disputes, but to solidify his position at the helm of demon society, ensuring that his authority remained unchallenged.

He yearned for the demons to see him as a Demon Lord of unparalleled power, someone who could protect their interests and to instil in the minds of his fellow demons a deep-seated belief in his power, wisdom, and ability to navigate the treacherous currents of their world.

Having lived for more than 4000 years, they were beings of great wits and acumen. How could the Demon Archdukes not see through Belial's plan?

"Well, he at least understands that leadership comes not only from physical prowess but also from the ability to sway other's minds and shape their perceptions" Gareth commented as he looked at his son who remained poised even while settling the disputes of the demons.

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Belial, standing before the assembly of demons, called out the names of several prominent Demon Dukes, each known for their powerful forces and long standing disputes.

"Duke Vortigern, you claim ownership of the Blighted Moors, citing your ancestral ties to the land and your family's longstanding dominance. However, Duke Morvath, ruler of the Shrouded Marshes, presents evidence of ancient texts that suggest their ancient history of noble lineages. Do you have any evidence besides your claim that proves that you are the rightful owner of Blighted Moors?"

The hall fell silent as Belial continued, addressing each Duke and their territorial claims, weighing the evidence presented by both sides. He listened attentively to their arguments, considering the historical records, testimonies from witnesses, and the strategic significance of the contested territories.

After a careful deliberation, Belial rendered his verdict.

"Duke Vortigern, as you have failed to provide adequate evidence, your claim over the Blighted Moors cannot be recognized. On the other hand, Duke Morvath you provide evidence of your ancestry to that land; however, these evidence are only from 800 years ago".

"If I remember correct, the Blightest Moors was the territory of the Demon Archduke who had perished long ago. Since then the land had been lying vacant. If that land belonged to you after that, why have you not positioned any of your subordinates or created any dungeons there? Why are you trying to take claim of that land now?"

"As your evidence is not foolproof, I declare the Blighted Moors a neutral territory, accessible to all demon nobles for hundred years. I trust that you both will honour this decision of mine and cease all hostilities for the next century".

Belial gazed at Duke Vortigern and Duke Morvath, seeing that although reluctant at first, they nonetheless acquiesced to his words, he shifted his attention to other disputes.

As the discussion continued, the venue erupted in murmurs and whispers as the demons absorbed Belial's decisions. Some expressed satisfaction, others frustration, but all understood the weight of his authority.

Belial's judgments although bitter to swallow, was impartial and taken after much deliberation and evidence. In cases where both the parties showed decietful claims over a territory, like Duke Vortigern and Duke Morvath, the territory was declared neutral for a hundred years.

Any demon nobles can come and go from that territory; however, no one is allowed to set up a dungeon or acquire that land.

During all this Belial maintained his neutral stance and further solidified his position as the Demon Lord into the hearts of many demon nobles. And so, after many discussions, the topic that a particular Demon Earl was waiting for, was finally waged.

The coveted Ghastly Winding Forest.

The moment, Belial brought out this topic, two influential demon dukes who were eagerly awaiting their opportunity to stake their claims on this land strode forward.

"Duke Gelford of the Great Sphinx Desert," Belial began, "and Duke Arctaurus of the Stygian Grounds, I see that you have been fighting over the Ghastly Winding Forest for a long period of time. I believe that you have also brought this topic up in the many Hexennacht's before this too. However, don't worry, a decision shall be made today".

Ghastly Winding Forest, it was a place renowned in the Demon Continent for being one of the most ancient and mystical lands. Whether it be the mighty Demon Dukes or the Demon Lord of Envy himself none of them knew much about this land besides the fact that it was a place of ethereal beauty with trees and vibrant foliage that was next to impossible to be encountered in the Demon Continent.

What's more, it was one of the lands that bordered the Central continent and was a strategic location. Other than this fact, it was also known that the forest was a place of bountiful resources and hidden treasures.

It also harbours rare and exotic plants with extraordinary properties, their essence coveted by alchemists and potion-makers for their transformative abilities. Furthermore, it is rumoured that the Ghastly Winding Forest held ancient relics and artefacts of immense power and historical significance.

Belial had once heard his father mention that the place might conceal a long-lost realm, with forgotten treasures hidden within its depths. However, a legend was a legend, when Belial surveyed the place a long time ago, he found nothing.

That being said, the allure of obtaining these relics with immeasurable power and prestige that could potentially elevate their position and power in the demon society, was irresistible for many of the demons here.

As such fueled by their ambitions, it was only natural for these influential Demon Dukes to fight over the forest. A hush silence fell over the venue as the demons leaned forward, awaiting Belial's verdict.

The latter listened intently to their impassioned pleas. Duke Arctaurus spoke, he argued that his territory, the Stygian Grounds had historical ties to the Ghastly Winding Forest. He claimed that his ancestors had established a presence there thousands of years ago and had maintained a vigilant watch over the forest's secrets.

He spoke of the ancient pacts and bloodlines that bound his ancestry to the very essence of the forest, asserting that no other demon could rival his claim.

On the other hand...

"The Ghastly Winding forest is a strategic location that shares sixty per cent of its borders with my territory. It holds a great significance to me, and I have already made substantial investments in its exploration and development. I had sent numerous demons and subordinates of mine to painstakingly map its treacherous pathways".

"I have already shed a lot of sweat and blood of my subordinates to counter the monsters living there. I cannot relent this land to Arctaurus whose ancestral claims relating to the forest makes no sense. I who have been monitoring this land have earned the right to control and benefit from the forest's bounties".

Duke Gelford, a charismatic Demon Duke hailing from the arid Great Sphinx Desert that bordered the Ghastly winding forest, claimed.

His bronzed skin etched with golden hieroglyphs glistened like hot desert sand beneath the scorching sun. While his piercing amber eyes mirrored the intensity of the inferno that raged within his soul.

Adorned in flowing robes the colour of shifting sands, intricately embroidered with golden threads depicting swirling sandstorms and ancient hieroglyphs, he commanded an air of authority and mystique.

A golden circlet adorned the Duke's head, bearing the emblem of the blazing sun, symbolizing his dominion over the arid lands from which he hailed.

As the heated debate raged on, it became evident that neither side could provide irrefutable evidence or undeniable claims over the Ghastly Winding Forest. The sound arguments they provided might seem fine to others; however, Belial knew that all these were craftily woven lies to get the rights over the forest.

None of their statements had any backing. Recognizing the stalemate, Belial, the Demon Lord of Envy, intervened to deliver his verdict.

"I have heard your claims and after a careful deliberation, I have come to a decision. Duke Arctaurus, Duke Gelford, your claims and statements are not enough to recognise either one of you as the rightful owner of the land. As such, I declare the Ghastly Winding Forest a neutral territory, belonging to neither Duke Arctaurus nor Duke Gelford. I believe there are no objections?"

Belial's eyes scanned the room for any signs of dissent or brewing conflict. Seeing the two Dukes even though somewhat discontent with his verdict, nod their heads, did he smile.

Given that he has stabilised his position and power among the demons, and firmly established himself as their leader, there was no way any demon would dare to show discontent or defy his verdict.

Or so he thought. However, just when he was about to move onto the topic of other lands, a voice interjected cutting through the hubbub of the venue and reaching the ears of every demon nobles present.

There is a reason why I have bothered to describe Duke Gelford. Can anyone predict what relation it might have with Simon?