

D. of Pride 681

Chapter 681- The Audacious Demon Earl (2)

"I have something to say".

The voices turned hushed and a momentary silence fell upon the gathering as all eyes turned towards the source of the interruption.

To dare to interrupt Belial, all the demons exchanged puzzled glances, wondering who this audacious individual could be. The commotion in the venue grew, with demons eager to catch a glimpse of the rude intruder.

Belial whose expression turned dark and sombre by this sudden interjection, hurriedly composed himself and fixed his gaze upon the figure that walked out from amidst the crowd.

The figure continued to stride forward and stood in front of the grand venue. When everyone saw who it was, all of them couldn't help but become stupefied. That was because the identity of the demon who interjected the ruling of the Demon Lord, was a Demon Earl.

It was a funny scene that nobody in the scene knew what to think about. A Demon Earl whose actual place belonged as a subordinate of these high ranking demons, had actually interjected in between their discussion.

What's more this demon had even boldly strode forward and stood in front of them.

Who was this fellow, and what was their purpose in daring to interrupt the ruling? The demons were having these thoughts, when the Demon Earl spoke.

"The Ghastly Winding forest cannot be declared a neutral territory where any demon is barred from setting up their forces. The demon Lord has heard Duke Arctaurus and Duke Gelford's side. However, he is yet to hear my side of the statement. As such, I hope the demon lord waits before he gives his final verdict".

Silence~ As soon as those words sounded out it, it was as if the entire venue had turned dead silent. This silence persisted for a while when suddenly the entire place erupted in laughter at the words of this Demon Earl who had interrupted Belial with such audacity.

The high ranking demons present, couldn't help but find the situation amusing, their initial apprehension giving way to a collective sense of amusement.

Here was yet another demon vying for territory and wanting his claims to be heard. However, he had forgotten that this was not his place to interject. A mere Demon Earl with a far impure noble bloodline did not have the authority to stand amongst them and vy for a piece of territory that was also coveted by many high ranking demons.

Belial, initially taken aback by the interruption, couldn't help but crack a smile at the absurdity of the situation. His stern countenance softened, and he motioned for the laughter to subside, eager to hear what this audacious Demon Earl had to say.

Setting aside the fact that his verdict could be changed, as a Demon Lord who portrayed himself to be the leader of all demons, he thought that he should hear the demon out even if the latter was just a Demon Earl at the very least.

"Well, Dear Earl, since you've managed to capture our attention so effectively, I believe it's only fair that you state your purpose for interrupting our proceedings. Pray, enlighten us with your audacious words. Go on, I shall hear what you have to say, lest anybody says that I'm not impartial or am taking sides".

HAHAHA... Belial's words caused the demon to erupt into a bout of laughter once again. The atmosphere, once tense and serious, transformed into one of lightheartedness and amusement.

However, the Demon Earl didn't seem to mind being the centre of attention or amusement for that fact. He cleared his throat and addressed.

"My esteemed fellow demons, the reason why I interrupted you all is because you have forgotten a crucial detail. The forest that you claim to be yours, is actually my territory. No one has more claim over it than I"...

The Demon Earl spoke looking towards the two Dukes fighting over the Ghastly Winding Forest. Duke Arctaurus and Duke Gelford frowned their brows while the surrounding demon erupted into muffled laughter once again.

"Who is this demon, where did he come from?" many demons laughed at the clown that was the Demon earl.

On one corner of the venue, Avrox who was fawning over a certain Demon Duke, noticed the Demon Earl, now the centre of attention.

"Hm? Isn't he that demon?". Although the demon's aura was a little different right now, it was nevertheless similar to the one he had encountered back in that human kingdom.

"There is no mistaking it, he is that demon. Heh, to think that he would be bold enough to intervene between two Demon Dukes. I guess idiots do get born even among the Demon Nobles" Avrox smiled looking at Simon.

Yes, the Demon Earl who halted the ruling and dived in between two Demon Dukes fearlessly, was none other than Simon.

Duke Arctaurus who never thought that a mere Demon Earl would dare to covet what he desired, was annoyed. Raising an eyebrow, he pointed at the other party and spoke dismissively.

"Who are you? Do you know where you are standing? This is not the place for a mere Demon Earl to interject".

While Arctaurus was too quick to dismiss Simon, Duke Gelford on the other hand intensely observed the Demon Earl. The fact that the latter stood all composed and calm even when subjected to the ridiculing gaze and the pressure of so many high ranking demons, spoke gravity about their character.

But more than that, the fact that this Demon Earl was seen with Oswald, concerned Gelford more.

"Could it be that Oswald is also interested in the Ghastly winding Forest and is using this Demon Earl to make his statement for him? But his territory should be in the far west of the Demon Continent, why is he coveting a territory that is at the southernmost borders of the Demon Continent? Could it be that he has some other objective?"

While the duke was busy speculating, the demon earl introduced himself.

"I go by the name Simon and as you already know, I am a Demon Earl. You are right that this is no place for me to interject. However, I had no choice but to do so. The Ghastly Winding Forest you all claim as yours, is actually mine to claim for this is where I have set up my dungeon".

The crowd chuckled, unable to contain their amusement at the audacity of a mere Demon Earl making such a claim.

On the other hand, Duke Arctaurus struggled to suppress his fury. Since when was it that a Demon Earl could talk back to him?

"Earl Simon, are you jesting? If so then it is in very bad taste or are we to believe that you, with your humble rank, possess the audacity to claim such a coveted territory?"

Simon in the wake of the pressure of the Demon Duke, did not back down, instead, he pressed forward.

"I am not jesting. Instead, I speak the truth. The forest is where I have set up my dungeon and so I have the right to claim the territory as my own".

This was his only chance to assert his claim over the Ghastly Winding Forest. If he allowed this chance to slip by, his territory might really be declared a neutral ground not belonging to a single demon noble.

The fact that he had set up his dungeon there, will not be recognised and considered illegal with no claims over the land. At that time, any demon can declare a war on his dungeon and they would be morally and lawfully in the right.

As such, Simon couldn't back away now. Even if he has to step on some toes and offend a few high ranking demons, he has to let them know that the Ghastly Winding Forest was his territory and his alone and that they should back away.

Fortunately for him, Oswell who attended many such gatherings, had given him few ideas on how to go on about it.

Simon turned his attention towards Belial. This Hexennacht was different from all others in that there was an absolute presence presiding over it, namely the Demon Lord. He was the arbitrator and the judge who had the final say.

As such, he could use the other party's intentions to solidify himself as the leader who thought for the whole demonkind and was impartial in his judgement and appeal to them in front of the whole crowd.

Belial who saw the Demon Earl turned towards him spoke with a voice carrying a tinge of playfulness: "Earl Simon, your claim to the Ghastly Winding Forest is certainly unconventional, but it begs the question: What evidence do you present to support your claim and dungeon ownership?".

"Esteemed Demon Lord, my evidence is my birth, I was born in the Ghastly Winding Forest. The trees, the land and the air there is my birthright. The dungeon that I speak of, is built within its depths".

The venue buzzed with incredulous whispers, as demons exchanged amused glances at the Earl's claim. It was as if the venue had transformed into a theatre, with Earl Simon playing the role of a clownish protagonist.

"What nonsense, Demon Lord please don't listen to his rubbish. This demon has forgotten his place and is unable to recognise the immensity of the gathering" Duke Arctaurus was unable to hear the Demon Earl any longer and thus appealed to Belial to close this case.

The Demon Lord of Envy nodded his head, seemingly in agreement. He addressed the Earl in front of the crowd.

"Earl Simon, while your claim may be met with scepticism, I must admit, your conviction is commendable. If nothing else, you have certainly provided us with entertainment. But I'm afraid your claim holds no weight. As such, my verdict remains...".

Chapter 682- Ritual of the Blades

Belial prepared to give his verdict regarding the Ghastly Winding Forest for once and all, when another voice intervened his ruling.

"A moment please, Demon Lord Belial. I believe it is too hasty to rule out the claim of the Earl Simon this early".

A figure walked out and stood beside Simon. They had a chubby face, plump belly and coffee brown eyes. Unlike the time with the demon earl, the crowd did not erupt this time. The reason for

that was because the one to intervene in the matter of two powerful Demon Dukes, was a Demon Duke himself.

Oswell who was renowned among the entire demonkind, stood before the crowd.

"Oswell, this is not a matter for you to intervene in" Duke Arctaurus spat in irritation. However, his coercion had no effects on someone who was equal or even stronger than him.

"Well, just listen. I am not here to talk with you two. Demon Lord Belial, I believe you of all demons will act impartially in this matter and uphold justice for all who seek your judgement. The reason why I defend this friend here is because his statement makes the most sense".

"As fellow demonkind, we should all know that the concept of land and territory is deeply intertwined with the notion of our birthright. Us demons hold a profound connection to the land we are born upon, and through ancient traditions and customs, these territories become an inherent part of our identity and power".

"When a demon is born from the ample mana of a specific land, they inherit the essence and energy of that place, entwining their very being with the land itself. This bond runs deep, shaping their characteristics, strengths, and even their magical affinity. As such, the land becomes their birthright".

Oswell words quickly grabbed the attention of the audience. The things that he spouted were all facts and something that all high ranking demons know about. As such, they had no words for retort.

Seeing that the audience had become silent with all the murmuring ceased, Oswell continued—

"When a demon successfully establishes a dungeon within their land, it becomes a seal of their authority, further strengthening their claim and validating their right to rule that place. The birthright and the establishment of a dungeon are intrinsically linked, forming an unbreakable bond between the demon and the land they call their own".

"It is a testament to their lineage, a declaration of their heritage and sovereignty. To challenge the authority of a demon's birthright is to defy the fundamental laws and traditions that have shaped the demon realm for aeons, an act that often leads to conflicts and territorial disputes among the demon nobles".

"I hope that Duke Arctaurus and Gelford understand this. Rather than fighting over with each other for a territory that do not even belong to you, why not recognise this demon's claim and his birthright? So what if he is just a Demon Earl, aren't he one of the demonkind, one of us?"

Oswell craftily glanced at Simon and both of them nodded in understanding. The two of them slightly bowed their heads towards Belial in a show of courtesy and implored him.

"Demon Lord Belial, just a few moments ago you spoke about how we need to form alliance and cease our ambitions in front of the external threats and resolve all of our quarrels peacefully. However, if you declare the forest as a neutral territory wouldn't this just create a new reason for dispute for this friend here who has birthright over that land?"

"I understand that by declaring the Ghastly Winding Forest a neutral territory, would cause these two dukes to stop fighting. However, isn't that only for a hundred years? I'm sure they are bound to fight and go after each other blood just like they have been doing up until now after this agreement is over".

"Instead of a solution that is only temporary, don't you think declaring the forest as the territory of this Demon Earl, would be a permanent solution? If you acknowledge his claims over the territory, the two dukes will have no reason to fight any longer".

In this intricate web of schemes, where every demon noble were trying to plot and fulfil their own self serving ambitions, Oswald's speech of truth subverted all of that.

He did not only speak for Simon, but for all Demons, whether they be Demon Earl or any low ranking demon. With him bringing the fundamental laws that shaped the very demon realm, even if the high ranking demon nobles didn't want to, they couldn't help but recognise the claims of this Demon Earl.

After all, denying him of his birthright would be defying these very same laws. If that happened, the entire foundation of the demon society would be shaken and they would revert back to the era before the Second Apex War with chaos left unfettered.

Whispers filled the venue as all the demons started musing and considering the words that Oswald had spoken, their voices barely audible over the rising murmurs.

Belial, who stood as the arbiter and judge for this matter, couldn't help but feel a twinge of unease as he locked eyes with Oswald. His mind raced as he tried to figure out the motive behind Oswald's intervention.

Why would a powerful and famous Demon Duke like him support a mere Demon Earl? That said, now that Oswald had intervened, and had even brought up the words he said previously, he couldn't dismiss the Earl without giving their statements and claims a fair consideration.

"As one of the rulers of the demon realm, it is my duty to ensure fairness and justice for all demons, regardless of their rank. While the claims of a Demon Earl may seem inconsequential compared to those of high-ranking dukes, I must uphold the principles of impartiality and lead with integrity."

Belial knew that if he wanted to maintain his position, he had to show all the demons that his leadership was impartial to all of them.

As his words reverberated through the venue, many demons began to see Belial in a new light. The notion of a demon lord valuing every voice, regardless of their rank, resonated within the hearts of many.

"Earl Simon, your claims to the Ghastly Winding Forest shall be carefully considered, as per the principles of fairness that govern our realm. However, I cannot give a verdict without checking all the facts. You say that you were born and had set up your dungeon in the Ghastly winding Forest? What evidence do you have to support your claims".

Belial questioned playing the part of the judge.

Simon who knew that he would be asked to provide an evidence, took out a parchment of paper from his space ring and started drawing. After a while, he put his drawing up and displayed it to everyone in a dramatic flair.

"Is that a... map of the Ghastly Winding forest?" Belial spoke looking at the thing the Earl drew up.

"That's right" The intricate line and pathways he drew up, was the map of the Ghastly winding forest. It was quite detailed and looked like something an expert cartographer drew up.

For Simon who had the aid of the [Mental Map] drawing a map of a territory he was so familiar with, wasn't a big thing. Many demons gazed at the map drawn by the earl with interest. Those who had seen the Ghastly winding Forest before, could tell that it was an actual map.

"Although the map is really of the forest in question. However, it alone isn't proof enough to support your claim. Do you have anything else that is an actual evidence?"

Simon narrowed his eyes at those words from Belial. What other evidence does he want? He even went to the lengths of providing a detailed map of the forest whereas all the other two Demon Dukes did was state a few words.

Simon knew that Belial was deliberately making things difficult for him. His intentions were clear, although the latter did say he would hear him out to show the crowd he was impartial, they didn't say anything about approving his claims.

On one side were two influential Demon Dukes and on the other a mere Demon Earl. It was clear in whose favour Belial would give judgement towards. But he had forgotten one thing, the Demon Earl wasn't alone.

As if to tip the balance of the scale, Oswald stepped forward. "If that is not evidence enough, then how about I say that I have seen his dungeon. I can vouch for this friend here and his claims. How about it, is this evidence enough".

The venue was rendered silent once again. the observing demons exchanged glances with one another in intrigue. With Oswald's intervention and him vouching for the Demon Earl, the latter's claim towards the Ghastly Winding Forest was no longer as inconsequential as before.

On the contrary, it might hold heavier weight than the claims of the other dukes. After all, it was a known fact that Oswald was a very famous Demon Duke and was favoured by many Archdukes and even by the Demon Lord himself.

Belial looked at Oswald and the Demon Earl. Just when he was contemplating something, Duke Arctaurus stepped forward amidst the murmurs of the crowd.

"Please hold on to your ruling Demon Lord. If this Demon Earl truly seeks to claim the Ghastly Winding Forest as his territory, he must prove his worthiness through strength and power. Mere words and birthright are not enough to secure such a prized domain."

Chapter 683- Ritual Of The Blades (2)

With a voice resonating with confidence and challenge, Duke Arctaurus declared.

All eyes in the venue shifted towards Belial, waiting for his response to Duke Arctaurus' proposal.

"What Duke Arctaurus said is very plausible. The ability to defend and maintain a territory is indeed a crucial aspect of a demon's rule. It is only fair to test the strength and power of those who seek to claim it. Earl Simon, the Ghastly Winding Forest is a territory coveted by many. Are you prepared to defend your claim against those who may challenge it?"

Belial glanced at Simon with intrigue as he addressed.

"Duke Arctaurus, this is not within the laws of our..." Oswald who was about to speak up on behalf of Simon once again, felt a pat on his shoulder. When he turned around to look, he saw his friend give him a nod of assurance.

Simon initially taken aback by the Duke's challenge, gathered his composure and spoke with conviction:

"I accept Duke Arctaurus' proposition. It is only right that I defend what is mine. How can I claim a territory as mine if I do not even possess the power to protect it? That said, how should I prove my worthiness to Duke Arctaurus that I possess the strength and power to defend my territory?"

With a calm and resolute voice, he asked.

"It's simple, we decide it by Ritual of Blades" Duke Arctaurus shrugged his shoulders and declared with a grin.

Ritual of Blades, Simon recalled from his inherited memories that it was an ancient tradition among the demons, a solemn ceremony that arises when conflicts escalate to a point where words alone cannot resolve the opposing views.

It is a time honored practice rooted in the belief that the clash of blades can reveal the truth and settle disputes that transcend mere rhetoric.

When faced with an impasse, both sides willingly participate in the Ritual of Blades. Each party selects their most skilled and formidable subordinates. These chosen champions become the embodiment of their masters' convictions, wielding their blades with unyielding resolve.

In other words, what Duke Arctaurus was saying was that they let their subordinates fight and let the fate of the Ghastly Winding Forest decide through that.

"Ritual of Blades?! Duke Arctaurus you should know that you can only evoke such a duel when both parties are equal. You are a Demon Duke, how can you even challenge a Demon Earl to a Ritual of Blade?"...

"Oswell, I did not ask you. This is a matter for that Demon Earl to decide. Whether he wants to accept this Ritual of Blades like the demon he is or back away like a wuss, is up to him. Either way, it will be proven how worthy this demon is of the Ghastly Windifn Forest that he claims as his own".

"Additionally, I would like to add another condition. In this Ritual of Blades, one cannot take the help of another. That is to say, one can only depend on their own power and subordinates".

Duke Arctaurus looked towards Oswell and grinned. With this, he Whispers spread throughout the venue, the demons captivated by the prospect of the duel.

had sealed his victory. Now the Demon Earl cannot refuse the Ritual of Blades and nor can he take the help of Oswell.

Whispers spread throughout the venue, the demons captivated by the prospect of the duel.

What would the Demon Earl decide? Would he choose to accept the duel or would he cower at the other party's power and go back on his words?

All the demons looked on with amusement. Many of them thought that the Demon Earl wouldn't dare after all, the Demon Duke beside him cannot back him anymore. However, contrary to the expectation...

"I accept this proposal. I will send my subordinate to face Duke Arctuarus' champion and prove it in front of the entire gathering that I can defend my own territory"...

Simon accepted the duel. The crowd was immediately abuzz with excitement. Why would they not? After all, it is not just every day that they get to see a Demon Earl daring to challenge a Demon Duke.

Even though they already knew the outcome, they still wanted to witness a bloody duel. It was just in their nature.

'Duke Arctaurus this sly fox, he really closed all the doors for the demon earl' Belial contemplated for a second before responding to the wishes of the Earl and the Duke.

"Very well, since both the sides have agreed, let this be a test of strength and prowess for the Demon Earl. I shall oversee this Ritual of Blades, ensuring fairness and impartiality. The outcome of this duel will determine if the claims made by Earl Simon over the Ghastly Winding Forest is rightful or not."

Right after saying that, Belial conjured his mighty mystical energy and created a powerful barrier at the centre of the venue.

This was where the Ritual of the Blades will take place. Since he deemed that the duel will not take too long given how lopsided the outcome looked, he believed that the barrier was enough to hold them down.

"Minos"..

With Duke Arctaurus's beckoning, a tall figure emerged behind him. Standing at least five meters tall, this huge creature embodies sheer strength and raw power. Its muscular frame is adorned with coarse fur of varying shades of brown and black, adding to its fearsome visage.

Horns of immense proportions curve outward from its head, forming formidable weapons that can pierce even the sturdiest of metals. Each step of its massive hooves resonates with earth-shaking force, leaving a trail of tremors in its wake.

Its crimson eyes glow with an intense ferocity, reflecting its unyielding determination and an unquenchable thirst for battle. It had a monstrous bullhead and its massive arms carried a huge battle axe.

The being standing behind Duke Arctaurus was none other than a Minotaur.

"Minos... Go" pointing at the centre of the venue where the barrier was laid, the Duke threw two simple words at his subordinate.

The minotaurus simply snarled, fires and lightning crackling from its nose. It walked inside the barrier and waited for its opponent.

Seeing the subordinate Duke Arctaurus sent forward, the observing demons started murmuring. Their eyes held fascination for this legendary creature that was even rarer than the massive three headed Infernal Dog, Cerberax.

Its presence alone was enough to turn the tide of any conflict, with its huge frame brimming with combat prowess, it was a true juggernaut on the field of battle.

"So Arctaurus sent his most powerful summon huh? Tch, he is not called the father of Minotaurus for no reason. Simon, be careful that minotaur is not any ordinary minotaur, but a powerful mutated beast deserving of an [A] rank, Giga Minotaur".

"It is a being of extreme destructive power, capable of defeating many of the Demon Dukes here. However, it is yet to reach the ultimate level of its rank. If possible, tell your subordinates not to fight it in a direct physical combat" Oswald cautioned in a low voice that only they could hear.

"Yeah, I know. You have already done plenty by manipulating the entire flow of events till here, leave the rest to me" Simon assured.

Everything that led to this moment up until now, from him stepping up to claim the Ghastly Winding Forest as his own territory to Ritual of the Blades, it flowed exactly how Oswald and Simon had planned back inside the Air Engine.

Although there were some unexpected factors, the situation developed more or less the way they had predicted. Having said that, it was time for him to send his own subordinate forward for the Ritual of the Blades.

"Theodore"..

"Leave it to me master...?" As soon as Simon called out, the boy jumped into action. However, before he could go forward, he realised that his cape was tightly held by his sister who was giving him a stern look.

"What's wrong Maybell?" Theodore asked tilting his head.

Maybell did not answer him, instead, she continued to hold his cape and turned towards her master.

"Master, let me have this chance instead of brother".

"You want to fight the Giga Minotaur?" Simon asked perplexed. He did not remember creating Maybell as a battle maniac. The setting that he put for her was a shy little lady, noble and polite, who cared for the people dear to her but is unable to portray it out.

Someone who lives under the shadows of her always hyper active and high achieving brother, but can be quite temperamental and fierce if need be. Also, she had a fondness for pets, especially cats.

Simon couldn't believe that someone like her would take the initiative to step forward to battle.

"Ahh!! I get it now. Maybell you... you want to make that minotaur your pet" Being twins and her brother, Theodore realised Maybell's intention after thinking for a while.

"What? You can't do that Maybell. This is the Ritual of the Blades, an ancient duel of the Demon Nobles. You can fight him if you want; however, making it your familiar is a no. Do you understand that?"

On Simon's admonishing, the little lady nodded her head gloomily.

"Alright, I leave this one to you. You know the plan right? Defeat it without showing much of your abilities. Also you cannot use [Snow Man Jack] or any other familiar in this battle for that fact".

"I get it master" pouting, the temperamental little lady stepped forward to complete the task given by her master.

'I hope things goes well' Although uncertain, Simon could only pray that Maybell remembers what he told her and does not go overboard.

Chapter 684- Good Boy

As Maybell walked towards the centre of the venue, all eyes turned towards her. Immediately afterwards, the audience became baffled.

Standing inside the barrier was Giga Minotaurus, a mutated beast worthy of [A] rank and someone who received a name. With its hulking frame that towers over the venue, bulging muscles that were forged from countless battles, it exuded an aura of primal ferocity.

Looking at it, the minotaur appeared to be the incarnation of brutality. Compared to that, the little lady walking forward although graceful and charming to look at, seemed just like a doll that was pampered and kept with much care and maintainance.

None of the demons could imagine such a doll having the slightest bit of chance against the incarnation of brutality that was the Giga Minotaur. On the contrary, they could only imagine this beauty getting destroyed by the beast in an instant.

"Is that Demon Earl serious? To send a subordinate like her, tch it's such a waste"...

"What else did you expect from a Demon Earl? I bet he does not even have the intention of fighting anymore. That is why, he is sending such a weak little girl forward for the Ritual of the Blades. Since he knows he will lose, he wants to cut his losses to a minimum".

The flow of conversation was heavily favoured towards the Giga Minotaur.

On one corner of the venue, a Demon Duke who seemed to be in a particularly bad mood, cursed.

"Dammit" He shattered the glass of wine in his hand, its content soiling his clothes. The attendants beside him hurriedly tried to clean his clothes. However... "Get away from me" he pushed the attendants in annoyance and continued to glare at the stage set for the Ritual of Blades.

"Curses to that Demon Earl for sending that little girl that I desired".

The ball of obesity writhing in frustration was none other than Demon Duke Famoon, who had a clash with Simon on the way to the Hexennacht.

At that time, he tried to forcefully take possession of the twins. However, his attempts were met with a failure as Oswald blocked his path and his two subordinates were defeated by the twins.

Not only that, he even lost his prized possession, the Eye of Enigma that he purchased from the auction to the Demon Earl. Given all of that, how could he be in a great mood?

"You are nothing but a mere ant in my path yet you dare to go against me?" Famoon cursed. Even after suffering such loss, the latter had yet to learn his lesson. If anything, the loss only seemed to have further strengthened his hatred for the Demon Earl.

It was clear from Famoon's behaviour that he was yet to give up on the twins.

"Why does it appear that lord Famoon is in a bad mood? You just won the territory you have been fighting for with your rival for decades. Shouldn't you be happy?"

During such a time, a demon noble of the rank Earl, came to him and initiated a conversation.

"Avrox huh?! Why have you come to me? Get lost, I have no mood to speak to a Demon Earl right now" Famoon who was in a bad mood, shooed the demon away.

However, Avrox did not move and instead continued to converse with the demon duke.

"Haha, don't be like that Lord Famoon. Not all of us Demon Earls are like that fool there. We know our place and would never offend a demon higher ranking than us since it would only spell our own doom. That fool there is a special case. Either he has a few screws loose or he is just too conceited and prideful".

Famoon was silent for a while before deciding to engage the other party in a conversation.

"Does it appear like that from your view? From my perspective, it appears that Oswald is using the Demon earl to plan something. Or else how would a mere Demon Earl get so much audacity to stand in front of us Demon Dukes? I'm sure of it, this has something to do with Oswald. He even protected the Demon Earl on the way to the Hexennacht".

"Lord Oswald did? If it helps, I can listen to Lord Famoon's worries"

Avrox who stumbled upon some interesting piece of news, decided to lend an ear to Famoon who clearly seemed upset over something. The latter spilt everything in a bout of frustration.

"Hohh, so it's like that" Avrox eyes involuntarily shifted towards Simon in the distance as a cruel smile flashed on his face. This Hexennacht was going to be very interesting.

Over at the area where the stage had been set, Maybell nimbly and carefully stepped forward and entered the barrier. The moment she did, the battle had started.

ROOARR... with a piercing roar that shook the very place and strike terror in the hearts of many demons, the Giga Minotaur charged forward. Its massive hooves pounding against the ground, causing tremors to ripple through the arena.

Generating a storm of flames and thunder in its wake, the Giga Minotaur jumped, crashing down at the area where Maybell was like a meteor.

BOOOM... A large depression formed on the ground and tremors spread across the venue. The observing audience gasped, leaning forward.

This was the might of the giga minotaur, it could shake the entire venue with just its jump. How could the little girl fight such a beast? No, she might already be done for.

All the eyes patiently observed the crater formed by the Giaga Minotaur. When the dust settled and they could find the corpse of the little girl anywhere, they all wore a frown of consternation on their faces.

Suddenly, their eyes traced a black and red shadow and there they saw her. Standing perfectly fine a few distances away from the Giga minotaur was the little girl assumed to have been squashed under the hooves of the Giga Minotaur.

Dressed in her black and red gothic dress, she stood there without any scratch or dirt on her clothes.

When did she move there? Many demon nobles had the same question. The demon dukes frowned in confusion while the Demon Archdukes seated in the distance silently watching the whole spectacle, narrowed their eyes sensing something.

Inside the barrier, recognising that its attacks had failed, the Giga Minotaurus fixed its eyes on the enemy. Its mighty fists raised the devastating power.

[Earth Splitting Wave]... one of the powerful skills of the Giga giant axe in the air and slammed it down on the ground with a devastating power.

[Earth Splitting Wave]... one of the powerful skills of the Giga Minotaur capable of splitting mountains. The destructive force that the axe sent forth rushed forward while splitting the ground in its wake.

Anything that is caught in its trajectory would be split in half. The destructive force spread from one corner of the stage to another, before slamming into the barrier and coming to a stop.

But that was not all, from the depth of the crack formed from the Earth Splitting Wave, fires and lightning imploded forth like a volcano. A single swing from the Giga Minotaur is able to pulverize solid barriers and send shockwaves reverberating through the battlefield.

Under the abuse of that skill, even the barrier created by Demon Lord himself barely stood standing. So one could imagine what would happen to the little girl who was the target of this destructive skill.

She was sure to have been killed by now. Or so were the thoughts of the onlooker. However, just like before there was no trace of that girl inside that crack instead, she had already moved to a different place.

She was so swift that no one could catch a glimpse of her movements other than a few Archdukes.

SNARL... the Giga Minotaurus after two failed attempts, snarled hot breaths of fire and lightning from its nostril and just like a bull it scrapped its legs on the ground ready to charge.

[Colossal Charge]... with raw destructive power, the Giga Minotaur charged forward with its powerful hindlegs that seemed like they could even support the weight of a mountain, stomped forward.

The skill [Colossal Charge] had tremendous speed and force behind it and was in no way weaker than the Bloodthorn Demonic Warhorse's [Hunderd Mountain's Charge]. It might even be even more powerful given that the Giga Minotuarus was not only an [A] rank beast, but also a mutated one at that.

The entire venue trembled with every step that the Giga Minotaur took and like a storm, it appeared before the girl in a rapid and swift fashion.

The latter just like usual dodge the charge at the very last second. Though this time, the Giga Minotaurus did not stop after a single attack, it channelled its charge into a [Rapid Spin], [Mighty Cleave], [Ground Pound].

One after the other, the legendary [A] rank beast displayed its unparalleled brute strength and raw power. It was like the embodiment of fury and primal ferocity with its gigantic battle axe capable of decimating anything with a single swing.

That was not all, the Giga Minotaurus' thick hide served as a formidable natural armor, crackling with flames and lightning and capable of withstanding even the most punishing of attacks.

Compared to that, the girl who dodged its attacks, embodied grace, agility, and a myriad of supernatural abilities. She possessed the speed and reflexes beyond their comprehension. Each of her movements was executed with a fluidity that defied all laws, allowing her to effortlessly dodge and weave through the air, avoiding the Minotaurus's thunderous strikes.

It was as if her preternatural senses granted her an uncanny awareness of her surroundings, enabling her to anticipate the minotaurs' moves with unerring accuracy.

Chapter 685- Good Boy (2)

What was going on? The onlooking audience held their breath, their eyes wide with a mix of surprise and confusion. Not sure of what to make out of the scene.

The one sided carnage that they expected, did not happen instead the little girl dodged and weaved through the attacks of the Giga minotaur in a spectacular fashion as if this was not the Ritual of Blades, but a bullfight.

They couldn't understand how such a little girl was able to keep up for so long against an opponent like the Giga Minotaurs without any fear or panic.

It needs to be mentioned that against an opponent like the Giga Minotaurus, even the demon dukes would have trouble facing it. Forget about dodging its attacks as seamlessly as the girl, they would have to go all out just to remain standing in the arena.

That is why, the scene unfolding before them, the figure of the little girl bravely facing the Giga minotaurus more than ten times her size, represented a dichotomy, something that was inconceivable for them at first.

The audience were shocked; however, the most shocked out of them all was the Demon Duke who was called as the father of the Minotaurus, Duke Arctuarus himself.

At this moment, his face was no longer as calm as before, replaced by a solemn look. He had sent his most powerful subordinate Minos up to the arena to swiftly end the battle and destroy whatever plan Oswald was hatching.

To that end, he did not even give Minos any instructions, and basically gave the other a free reign to rampage to their heart's content. This decision of his was taken even at the risk of divulging the strength of his subordinate in front of the whole demon kind. A loss that he was willing to incur as long as he can snip Oswald's plan.

However, contrary to his expectations, the battle that should have ended long ago, was still continuing. The other party continued to dodge Minos' attacks one after the other.

'Snort, I don't know what your motive is Oswald. However, if you think that you can use the Demon Earl to lay claim to a land that I desire, is your wishful thinking. That little girl might be very swift and agile, however, Minos only needs one good hit to finish this farce once and for all'

Arctaurus thought internally. Given the Giga Minotaurus' raw strength that generated powerful gales with every swing of his, it was only natural to assume that it was game over for the little girl if it ever connected.

Heck, it might be game over for many of the demons below the demon duke here. That was how powerful the Giga Minotaurus was. What's more the latter had yet to show its true strength.

Arctaurus believed that his subordinate had the overwhelming advantage in this matchup and this cat and mouse chase will soon be over. However little did he know that the mouse here was not the little girl, but the Giga Minotaurus instead.

Though by the time he would realise that it would already be too late.

BANG.. BANG... The battle raged on, a dance of titans, as the Minotaurus swung its massive battle axe in sweeping arcs, attempting to cleave through its puny opponent, it devastated the entire stage and bent the barrier out of shape.

It was clear that even the barrier set up by the demon lord himself, was unable to endure the powerful aftershocks of the Giga Minotaurs attacks. Yet facing that attack head on, the little girl looked the least bit fazed as she gracefully evaded each strike, moving with uncanny agility and supernatural speed.

However, the most astonishing moment that baffled everyone was when the little girl retaliated. Everybody thought that given her small frame and uncanny movement ability, she was only good at dodging with most of her stats focused on agility.

However shattering everyone's misconception, when she retaliated with lightning-fast strikes, her movements like a blur of calculated precision. Each blow landed with pinpoint accuracy, sapping the Minotaurus's strength and stamina and sending it crashing back against the barrier.

SHATTER... against Maybell's might, even the barrier meant to contain the aftershocks of their battle, shattered like a fragile piece of glass.

'What?' Belial shocked by the incredulous turn of events, widened his eyes. It was not only him, all the other high ranking demons were also so.

The scene where the Giga Minotaurus would be the one to be sent flying never occurred to them. And so for a moment there, they couldn't believe their eyes.

How was it possible for a little girl like her to send a monster of a beast like the Giga Minotaurus flying? As absurd as the turn of that this was just the beginning, Maybell walked towards the area where the Minotaurus had crashed and started another round of events may be, the truth was as what they witnessed.

However, the absurd scene was yet to end. As if telling everyone that this was just the beginning, Maybell walked towards the area where the Minotaurus had crashed and started another round of bashing.

But of course, how could the Giga Minotaurus take it lying down? Its crimson eyes enraged by the beating it suffered, glowed even crimson for some reason. And thus, a chaotic battle erupted in the middle of the venue.

The two champions duelling each other in the Ritual of the Blades, now made the entire venue their battleground. The powerful shockwaves generated from their clash turned the entire place upside down with damage and destruction spreading everywhere onto this once ancient and grand venue.

Some demons turned to flee, scared that they would get caught up in the aftermath others watched the whole spectacle with intrigue and trepidation.

"Belial, work with me to create another barrier around them" At this moment, when the entire gathering got caught in between the devastating clash of the two, the Demon Archduke Gareth unable to sit still, got up from his seat and approached Belial.

Together, they created another barrier far more powerful than before and only then, did the aftershocks from the battle die down.

The demons who took to flight, also settled down and landed back in the venue. After which they continued to observe the battle between the two contrasting figures, entranced by the illusion of a fierce clash.

That's right, unbeknownst to them, every strike and manoeuvre carried out by the Minotaurus was carefully choreographed under the control of the Antediluvian Ancestor.

Even the Giga Minotaurus did not know that it had fallen victim to a powerful mind control, and its seemingly valiant efforts were nothing more than a puppetry of Maybell's will.

Her manipulations continued, orchestrating the battle like a macabre symphony. The Giga Minotaurus stumbled, its movements uncoordinated and disjointed, yet still managing to maintain the facade of a formidable opponent.

The audience, enraptured by the spectacle, remained oblivious to the true nature of the battle, their collective gasps and cheers fueling the Vampire Ancestor's charade.

With each passing moment, Myabell's power over the mind-controlled Minotaurus grew stronger. Her commands echoed through the Minotaurus's mind, bending its will to his own.

Like a docile and obedient pet, the Minotaurus followed the vampire's every directive, its movements no longer driven by its own instincts but rather by the vampire's desires.

Maybell revelling in her triumph passed a subtle glance towards her master. This act from her was to gain his praise and show Simon that she had completed the task she had been given.

"This girl... did she really hear what I said?" with a wry smile on his face, Simon observed the battle unfolding in front of him.

Despite all of his warnings and instructions, the girl really did what she set out to do, make a pet out of the Minotaurus. Although she did maintain the facade of a fierce battle, the purpose of the fight, which was to make it look like she had obtained victory with a stroke of luck and that the battle could have ended in the victory of any side, was ruined.

With Maybell sending the Giga Minotaurus flying, she made every demon noble present in the venue curious about her. Simon could hear many of the demons discussing what race and level the girl fighting the minotaurus was.

Of course, all of their attempts to pry on her status were met with failure since her level was higher than theirs and that she possesses a strong blocking skill. But even then, the publicity that she got, could have been avoided or minimised had she stuck to the plan.

"Haha, Simon you crafty fellow. You are really a wolf in sheep's clothing. Whoever underestimated you, is sure to end up worse" Oswald commented from the side.

He who had spent some time with the twins, had a feeling that they were strong. Plus seeing the unfazed look on Simon since the start of the battle, he had been suspecting this for a while but now after seeing that spectacle, he was sure of his hypothesis.

The twins were more powerful than the Giga Minotaurus. Oswell was inwardly a little shocked.

Name- Minos

Race- Giga Minotaurus

Rank- [A]

Level- 731

Skills- Blunt Ultra resistance, Cut Ultra resistance, Piercing Ultra Resistance, Ultra Natural Recovery, Herculean Endurance, Herculean Defence, Super Enhanced Magic, Battle Instinct, Super Speed Regeneration, Five Senses Enhancement, Herculean Strength, Ultra Enhanced Agility, Great Axe Mastery, Berserk, Body Reinforcement, Intimidating Aura, Roar of Dominion.

Racial Skills- [Colossal Charge], [Raging Fury], [Unyielding Boost], [Titan's Resilience], [Ferocious Mauling], [Mighty Cleave], [Rampant Attacks], [Crushing Grip], [Ground Pound], [Frenzied Stomp], [Roaring Dominance], [Unbreakable Horns], [Monstrous Vitality], [Unstoppable Initiation], [Legacy of the Minotaur], [Ability Overlay], [Ability Conferment].

Chapter 686- Good Boy (3)

Even though it had yet to reach the peak level of its rank, a Giga Minotaurus was still a Giga Minotaurus, a powerful [A] rank mutated beast.

Even Aisha beside him who has reached the peak level of her rank, would have some trouble if she were to engage it in a physical fight without using her Spirit skills. However, the little girl in the arena was able to dominate the Giga Minotaurus in a pure physical and raw strength, even though it appeared to him that it was not her forte.

This in itself was enough to tell him that the girl's stats were far higher than the Giga Minotaur's. To be able to best an [A] rank in every way, means that the other party was at the very least also an [A] rank who had reached the peak level of their rank like Aisha or they were a rank above.

That is to say, the little girl called Maybell was an [S] rank subordinate.

It needs to be mentioned that the summoning of a [S] rank subordinate through the Dungeon Menu's [Summon] function was an exceedingly rare and exceptional occurrence within the demon realm.

Even for the most influential and accomplished demons, who have reached the pinnacle of their power and prestige, summoning a [S] rank subordinate was no joke.

The [S] rank is called as [S] rank because of their astronomical rarity. Even for the mightiest Demon Dukes, they would be considered fortunate to summon a [S] rank subordinate even once in their entire lifetime.

No matter how many emblems that they burned in hopes of that, it was the hard truth. The forces of the Demon Dukes mainly consist of [A] rank subordinates who acted as the general for their forces.

For the ancient Demon Archdukes, who had stood as pillars of strength and wisdom for thousands of years, summoning [S] rank subordinates might not be out of their reach. However, even then it would be an uphill challenge with a very negligible probability of summoning one.

A Demon Archduke might have one or two [S] rank subordinates leading their forces, a testament to their unparalleled authority and their ability to command beings of immense power and a mark of their status as legendary figures within the demon hierarchy.

So, it was an astonishing revelation to witness a relatively young demon earl, who hadn't even lived for that long, to actually be able to summon a [S] rank subordinate.

It could be said that it defied all the expectations and norms that had governed the realm for centuries, and would leave even the most experienced demons in awe and disbelief.

"Haha," Oswald laughed dryly coming to a realisation that no other demon here had noticed. Being one of the special demons himself, he knew about the profound connection and the influence the emblems had with the summoning function.

Each dungeon, a manifestation of its master's power and domain, possessed its own distinctive characteristics and energies. The emblem is just one of the conduits which reflects the unique qualities and traits of the demon who ruled over the dungeon, serving as a testament of their power, aspirations, and individuality.

They carried the imprints of the demon's conquests, their strength, and the qualities that set them apart from other demons. The emblems were, in a sense, a reflection of the demon's own prowess and potential.

These conduits produced by a demon noble's dungeon played a pivotal role in the summoning of subordinates through the Dungeon Menu.

Each dungeon has its own menu and [Summon] option that is only accessible to the master of the dungeon. The emblems acted as keys that unlocked the specific frequencies and resonances required to attract and bind certain types of subordinates.

The diversity of dungeons across the demon realm resulted in a vast array of emblems, each with its own distinct properties and potential and specific to that dungeon.

Some emblems radiated fiery energy, attuned to summoning fire-based subordinates of immense power. Others emanated an aura of shadow and darkness, drawing forth stealthy and elusive subordinates who excelled in subterfuge and assassination.

Some brought forth beings specialised in raw power and strength and some elemental creatures of unknown origin.

Taking Arctaurus for example, he was called the father of Minotaurus because of his personal trait and ability that summoned all kinds of Minotaurus. There were also other Demon Dukes like Megera whose personal trait resonates with earth based creatures like the Gargoyles.

The interplay between the emblems and the dungeons themselves was a complex dance, a delicate balance of resonance and attunement.

A demon who nurtured a powerful dungeon, enriched by the spoils of conquest and imbued with their own strength and ambition, would find their emblems resonating with greater potency.

This, in turn, would grant them access to higher ranking subordinates and elevate their summoning prowess. It is because of this reason that the ancient Demon Archdukes are able to summon a few [S] rank subordinates.

That being said, it is important to note, that the emblems were not the sole determinant of a demon's summoning potential. The demon's own power, knowledge, and a few special factors played a crucial role in the successful summoning of subordinates.

The emblems acted as a conduit, channelling the demon's intention and providing a framework within which the summoning process could unfold.

So for Simon to have summoned a [S] rank subordinate, it spoke much about the latter's potential, personal trait, power, ambition and speciality.

What's more, if the news about this extraordinary feat gets known, it was unknown what kind of ripple it would create through the demon realm.

"As I thought, he is hiding some great secret". Oswald could tell because he too was special in his own way.

"Master, I understand now why you wanted to befriend the demon. He is truly extraordinary. Establishing a good relationship with him and making him owe you one at this stage when he is still weak, will definitely help you out in the future"

Aisha commented from Oswald's side. Her eyes were glued to the girl with black and red dress, fighting the Giga Minotaur as if it was a plushie made out of cotton.

"That was the case before, right now I really want to make him my friend" Oswald revealed his intentions.

Although at first, it was undeniably true that he had his own motive for approaching Simon. However, the more time he spent and the more he got to know the other, he understood that the other party was just like him.

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Over in the new arena that was personally set up by Gareth with the help of the Demon Lord, the Giga Minotaur was getting the bashing of its life.

Duke Arctaurus who was watching, questioned the unfolding situation with a voice laced with frustration and confusion.

"What... what has happened to the Giga Minotaurus? Why is it not following my orders? This is not how it was supposed to be!".

He urged the Giga Minotaur to regain control and show its true power. However, how could it be easy to snap out of the mind control of an Antediluvian Ancestor?

With each passing moment, Myabell's influence over the mind-controlled Minotaurus grew stronger. Her commands echoed through the Minotaurus's mind, bending its will to her own. Like a docile and obedient pet, the Minotaurus followed the vampire's every directive, its movements no longer driven by its own instincts but rather by the vampire's desires.

The battle continued, each move punctuated by an air of grace and precision from Maybell. With seemingly effortless grace, she sidestepped the Giga Minotaurus's attacks, her movements calculated and fluid.

Her eyes gleamed with a mixture of confidence and amusement as she danced around the lumbering beast. The Giga Minotaurus, despite its tremendous strength and imposing stature, found itself trapped in a web of the Antediluvian Ancestor's control.

Every swing of its massive fists and every charge was met with agile evasion and strategic counterattacks. It was as if Maybell toyed with the creature, exploiting its blind obedience and turning it into a mere puppet in her hands.

The illusion of a battle persisted, the audience watched in awe, unaware that they were witnessing a display of the Vampire Ancestor's dominance, rather than a genuine contest of strength.

Through her shadow arts and mastery of manipulation, Maybell had completely turned the mighty Giga Minotaurus into a mere extension of her will. That said, only a select few in the shadows like Simon and Oswald were privy to this secret.

For other, as far as they knew, it was a masterful battle with both the side giving it their best.

"Alright, with this master's plan should have been completed. Now, its time to end this. Come charging at me like a good boy" Maybell muttered manipulating the Giga Minotaurus to get on all fours and come charging at her like a typhoon.

[Colossal Charge], [Unbreakable Horns]... the Giga Minotaurus used two of its most powerful skills in a bout of its final attack. Its horn glowed with a devastating light and its charge powered by its powerful hind legs and multiple augmenting skills, was a like charge of death itself.

The entire venue trembled as all eyes focused on the lumbering giant of a beast which scared even the most stalwart of the souls here.

RUMBLE... RUMBLE... as the gigantic beast closed near the girl, the demons saw her execute a flawless set of movements and elegantly dodged the beast.

BANG... With Maybell dodging its charge, the Giga Minotaurus slammed into the barrier, sending numerous cracks and ripples through it.

Chapter 687- Enemies on a narrow path

Being made by two of the most powerful demons here, the barrier although got cracked, did not break and swiftly restored himself. Though the same couldn't be said for the Giga Minotaur who took the full brunt of its own powerful charge of death.

Its body trembled as it took a few steps back and fell down on the ground powerlessly. Even with its [Titanic Resilience], the injury that the beast suffered was just too much. The Giga Minotaurus was defeated.

SILENCE~ there was a deathly silence in the venue for a while before the audience erupted in a mixture of awe and disbelief.

For a long time, they couldn't believe what they had witnessed, the defeat of a formidable creature by the hands of a seemingly fragile girl seemed so unpalatable that some of them even had to rub their eyes to clear the doubt.

Why would they not, after all, a powerful subordinate like the [A] rank Giga Minotaurus was defeated. However, what they were most shocked by was not the fact that it was an [A] rank subordinate, but that it was the subordinate of a Demon Duke.

In other words, Duke Arctaurus a powerful Demon Duke had lost. In comparison, the subordinate of the Demon Earl who was still standing, had won the Ritual of the Blades shocking all of the demons present.

"This can't be" Duke Arctaurus, his face etched with frustration and disappointment, could do nothing but watch as Maybell emerged victorious.

The realisation that he had miscalculated and the power of the little girl settled upon him like a heavyweight. He had underestimated her, and now he and his subordinate stood defeated.

"Oh, dear Duke Arctaurus, it seems you have underestimated the power of my friend here. Your loyal minion has fallen, defeated by the subordinate of a Demon Earl that you look down upon so much"

A voice full of delight, sounded out at this moment, it was Oswald's. Of course, the demon was there to add salt to the injury.

Arctaurus furrowed his brows in disbelief and demanded an explanation "How can that be? There must be a mistake. How can I lose from a mere Demon Earl? That's right, he must have cheated. That demon earl must have done something"

In his unwillingness to accept defeat, he even started blaming Simon.

"So you will fall as low as to even spout nonsense now that you have lost? How shameful Duke Arctaurus. We all have witnessed their fight with our own eyes, so there is no way the Demon Earl could cheat. Or are you saying that you are unwilling to accept the results of the ancient tradition of the Ritual of the Blades that you yourself demanded in the first place".

"No, this...".

After silencing the Duke, Oswald turned towards Belial and urged him to give his verdict. The latter composed himself and looked at the result of the battle with solemn eyes. Even for him, it was

impossible to predict that the Giga Minotaurus would lose and that too from a subordinate of a mere Demon Earl.

As such, he didn't expect a turn of events like that. That said, he was still a demon Lord and as such, he quickly regained his wits back.

Now that Duke Arctaurus had lost the Ritual of the Blades that he himself initiated, even if Belial wanted to, he couldn't help the other.

"Belial, listen to me" At this moment, his eyes surreptitiously glanced towards the place where his father, the Demon Archduke Gareth was seated as a mental transmission was shared between them.

"I have no intentions of interfering with your decision; however, I sense a peculiar power within the Demon Earl's subordinate. There is something unique about them. Follow your instincts, and do what you feel is right".

"But do remember that those stubborn fellows are watching. If you side too much with Arctaurus, you would be vandalising your own position and relationship with Oswald".

The mental transmission from Gareth carried a sense of concern and curiosity.

"I understand father, I will make a verdict befitting my position". Saying that, Belial glanced at the crowd, his regal aura bearing down on all the demons like a mountain.

"After careful consideration and evaluation, I hereby deliver my verdict." The hall fell into an expectant silence as all eyes fixed upon Belial, awaiting his decision.

The demon lord continued with an unwavering voice "The Ritual of the Blades has proven the might of the Demon Earl and his subordinate. It was an excellent battle between strength and agility and was an undeniable proof of their worthiness".

"As such, I decree that the Ghastly Winding Forest shall be recognized as the dominion of the Demon Earl Simon. Duke Arctaurus, Duke Gelford, I believe both of you have no qualms with my decision? If so then it is decided".

WOAHHH... With Belial's declaration, Whispers spread among the onlooking demons, their voices tinged with a mixture of admiration and disbelief.

The mighty subordinate of Duke Arctaurus whom nobody here thought would lose, lay defeated, knocked out by the subordinate of the Demon Earl they looked down upon. What's more, they even snatched the coveted territory of the Ghastly Winding Forest from the hands of the two dukes.

Something like this was unprecedented and shook the demons to their very core. The achievement of winning the Ritual of the Blades against an opponent like the Demon Duke, and proving his worthiness to protect his territory, marked Simon as one of the extraordinary demons in existence in the entire demon realm.

Now his name along with his territory, the Ghastly Winding forest was infamous to all the demons.

"Congratulations my friend, you achieved what you sought out to do" Oswald congratulated with a face full of smiles.

It was as he had said, winning the Ghastly winding Forest and spreading his name across the entire demon world, was what Simon had in his mind before coming to the Hexennacht.

"Although Belial decreed the forest as your territory, I doubt Duke Arctaurus and Duke Gelford who have been vying for this territory for centuries will give up so easily. They won't publicly show their opposition to the Demon Lord's verdict but they are sure to create troubles in your territory".

"That's how those two dukes are, especially Duke Arctaurus. To achieve his desires, that fellow will go to any lengths. And now, by defeating him in the Ritual of the Blades, you have completely earned his ire. I believe you know it already, but Belial's decree only holds true as long as you are alive. If you are out of the picture, the Ghastly Winding Forest will have no owner once again. So you have to be more careful in the future. "

Like a good friend, Oswald warned Simon of the upcoming trouble that he would have to face in the future.

Simon nodded his head making a wry smile. This was his first no second time socializing with the demon society. Yet every time, there would be some trouble or another latching onto him against his will.

This time though, it was entirely his own fault for throwing himself into trouble. He had deliberately and intentionally offended the two powerful dukes while fully knowing what would happen.

What Oswald said was just to be expected. That being said, Simon had no regrets, he did what he had to do. And if given another chance, he would still repeat this action of his and offend as many demons if it meant getting what he wanted.

The barrier was released and the adorable figure of Maybell quickly arrived before Simon.

"Master I completed what you asked me to" With a beaming smile, the former looked at the latter waiting to get praised. However, before Simon could commend his subordinate for her efforts, a complication occurred.

BAM... BAM... BAM... while shaking the entire venue with every step that it took, the Giga Minotaurus followed behind Maybell like a pet following its master.

"What are you doing Minos? Are you disobeying our contract?" And of course, following the appearance of the Giga Minotaurus, came the thundering voice of an angry Duke.

Duke Arctaurus whose face was writhing with fury and shame at the disobedience of his subordinate appeared before Simon and his group too.

The crowd which had settled down after watching an exciting show, started boiling up once again with the unfolding of a new drama.

"What is the meaning of this Earl Simon, why is Minos following behind that girl and rebelling against my orders?" Duke Arctaurus questioned glaring at Simon.

The latter sighed and observed the eyes of the Giga Minotaurus which had turned a peculiar blood red. Things proceeded just like he had feared, the Giga Minotaurus had become one of Maybell's familiars. The blood red pupils were the first stage of that process.

Simon glanced at Maybell who at this moment was avoiding his gaze. This little girl, despite his instructions went ahead and did what she wanted. That being said, he couldn't blame her because he When we get back home, I will summon some other subordinate for you, you can make them your familiar. How about it?" Simon was the one to program her behaviour like that in the first place.

As such, if Maybell were to be blamed, then he as her creator was equally responsible. That aside, this was not the time to blame anyone, instead he needed to find a way out of this.

"Maybell, undo the familiar covenant"

With a stern voice, Simon turned towards Maybell and asked her to release the covenant binding the Giga Minotaurus to her.

"But... " the little girl tried to protest; however... "No buts, just release the minotaurus. It is someone else's subordinate after all. When we get back home, I will summon some other subordinate for you, you can make them your familiar. How about it?" Simon directed her to release the Giga Minotaurus.

Chapter 688- Enemies on a narrow road (2)

"Buu~" Although still a little discontent Maybell still followed her master's orders and released the Giga Minotaurus from its bindings.

The eyes of the [A] rank beast now released from the familiar covenant, returned back to their usual crimson brownish colour.

"Don't worry, I will get you a better familiar than the minotaurus and it will be from the cat race too in the future" Seeing the dejected sight of Maybell, Simon promised.

"Really?! Yaaay~" As expected of a kitten lover, just merely mentioning cat was enough to get the little girl in high spirits once again.

Simon smiled and along with his group turned to head back to their seats, when the infuriated voice of Duke Arctaurus stopped them.

"What?! You are trying to Nullify our contract? Minos have you gone insane?".

It appeared that the situation was yet to be resolved. The Giga Minotaurus who was now freed from Maybell's binding, was now rejecting and disobeying his former master's command. Even going as far as to nullify their contract.

Contract was a special ability of the demon nobles. Fueled by their special blood, it enables them to forge agreements with their subjects. These contracts are not mere formalities but potent pacts that transcend ordinary alliances.

When a demon noble, be it a Demon Earl or Demon Duke initiates a contract, a remarkable phenomenon unfolds. The noble's blood, flowing with ancient power and primal force, becomes the catalyst for the binding ritual.

It is a connection, a link that intertwines the fates of the contracting parties. The bond forged through a contract is not limited to mere loyalty; it extends to obedience, protection, and even the transfer of knowledge.

The Demon Noble's commands become irresistible whispers in the mind of the bound, their will bending to the desires of their contracted master.

The power of the contract becomes greater the higher the power and rank of the demon is. So it could be imagined how powerful the contract initiated by a Demon Duke whose blood carried millennia of mystical energy and raw ancient power.

The highly pure noble blood of a Demon Duke carries with it a potency that surpasses all other forms of demonic binding. The contracts formed by these illustrious beings are nothing short of legendary, embodying the pinnacle of strength and dominance.

Yet such a contract was being breached; no, dissolved by the subject that it bound. This in itself spoke about how formidable the Giga Minotaurus was.

"Stop Minos!! Come to your right mind already"

Duke Arctaurus' face was aghast when he saw a pale blood coloured mark appear on Giga Minotaur's forehead before dissipating into thin air.

With the dissolution of that mark, the contract was also nullified and the Giga Minotaurus was now free of all the bindings. But of course, it had to pay a heavy price for it. It bled heavily from all of its seven orifices, severe burns appeared on its body and one of its unbreakable horns cracked and fell down.

That was not all, its body shrank and it lost a portion of its power. This was the sacrifice that the Giga Minotaurus had to go through to break the Contract it made with the duke. All so that it could go back and serve the master that had won him over.

The Giga Minotaurus now a little less intimidating, approached Simon and his group before kneeling down beside Maybell.

ROARR... with a subdued roar, it let its intentions known.

"Really you want to serve me? Hehe, you really are a good boy. In that case, I shall... Ah!! i forgot I cannot accept you... master told me that you cannot be my familiar".

Maybell who was about to giddily accept the Giga Minotaurus in her collection of familiars, suddenly recalled the words Simon told her and stopped.

She then turned towards him and tugged his clothes with a coy and heartbroken expression "Master, can't I have him?".

Seeing Maybell's pitiful and sad appearance, Simon released a deep sigh. 'This girl... who taught her this tactic?' Although he knew she was acting to get what she wanted, it was still hard for Simon to reject her now that the minotaurus even willingly came to her to serve her.

Plus being their parent and creator, he did not like seeing them all sad and unhappy like that. As such, he could only give her a go ahead nod and tackle the problems that would arise from this.

"Earl Simon, how do you explain this? Why is Minos behaving like that towards that girl? What did she do?" the enraged Duke Arctaurus demanded an explanation.

"What is with the commotion here? Duke Arctaurus, I believe I resolved the situation here or are you going against my verdict?".

At this moment when their outburst was starting to gather quite a bit of attention, Belial who had moved forward to settle the disputes with the other demons, interjected in between.

"It's not like that Demon Lord. I wouldn't dare to go against your verdict. I have no issues related to your decision over the Ghastly Winding Forest. It's just that the matter is not about the territory but about my subordinate Minos".

"It is behaving oddly for some reason and is disobeying all of my commands. I believe the Demon Earl did something to it. That is why, I was demanding an explanation from him" Duke Arctaurus explained.

Belial's piercing gaze shifted from the Duke towards the Demon Earl, his curiosity piqued by the discord that unfolded before him. With a measured tone, he addressed Arctaurus, seeking clarification amidst the brewing tension.

"What do you mean, Duke Arctaurus? Why does your subordinate, the Giga Minotaurus, now defy your commands?"..

"Demon Lord Belial, please amend justice. This dastardly Demon Earl has done something to my subordinate. The Giga Minotaurus, once loyal and obedient, now follows the commands of the Demon Earl's familiar. It is an affront to my authority and a blatant act of treachery!".

Hearing the Duke's accusations Belial narrowed his eyes and surveyed the Demon Earl, evaluating the situation with his discerning eyes.

Seeing that the Demon Earl showed no signs of apprehension or any guilty conscience even when faced with his pressure, a slight frown appeared on his face.

He raised a hand to silence the agitated crowd, before speaking with a subtle air of authority "Demon Earl, you stand accused of tampering with the subordinate of a fellow demon. Such actions carry grave consequences. How do you defend yourself against these allegations?"

The gathering turned their attention back towards Duke Arctaurus and the Demon Earl. It appeared that another complication appeared within them. All eyes focused towards the Demon Earl and the group around him, waiting for another drama to unfold.

However, what they didn't expect was for this drama to get even spicier with the interjection of another unexpected party.

"Demon Lord if I may interject"..

Two figures walked out from amidst the crowd and stood near Duke Arctaurus.

"You are..." Belial glanced at this unexpected interruption before recognising who they were. "I am Earl Avrox, a humble servant of the Demon Archduke Charthros. If I may have your permission, I have something to say in this regard".

The Demon Lord of Envy was silent as he observed the two new figures. One was a Demon Earl who just introduced himself while the other was a Demon Duke named Famoon. Seeing this duo together was quite unusual even for Belial. He nodded his head and allowed the other party to speak their mind.

"Since it's the subordinate of Demon Archduke Charthros, I will give him face and allow you to speak. Pray tell us, why did you interrupt us".

On Belial's beckoning, Avrox pretentiously took a step forward, pointed towards Famoon beside him with one hand and spoke.

"Demon Lord, since you are amending justice for Duke Arctaurus, you must also amend justice for Duke Famoon who similarly trusted that dastardly Earl and had been taken advantage of".

Like a performer, Avrox iterated what Famoon told him. His words carefully put to make the Duke to be the victim here and Earl Simon to be the criminal.

On one side, Duke Arctaurus revelled at this unexpected aid. He thought that with Oswald backing the demon earl, it would be hard for him to press the latter. However, who would have expected that he would gain an unexpected ally in such a situation?

'Snort, a demon earl who doesn't know his position. Since you dared to take away the territory that I desired, let's see how you get out of this situation.

.

.

"So you are telling me that Earl Simon here has stolen an artefact from Duke Famoon that he bought from the auction?"...

"That is right my lord"

possession. Earl Simon, whom I trusted as a friend and fellow noble, has betrayed that trust and taken what rightfully belonged to me."

Belial's eyes widened with a mixture of surprise and intrigue at the claim made by Earl Avrox. This revelation added a new layer of complexity to the already contentious situation, leaving the observing demons in a state of heightened curiosity.

"Duke Famoon, is it true that Earl Simon has stolen an artefact from you, an artefact that you had acquired through an auction?".

Famoon flashed a wicked smile towards Simon before speaking with an indignant voice "Demon Lord Belial, esteemed demons, I stand before you to confirm the theft of a priceless artefact from my possession. Earl Simon, whom I trusted as a friend and fellow noble, has betrayed that trust and taken what rightfully belonged to me."

As soon as those words fell, gasps and murmurs rippled through the crowd as demons exchanged astonished glances. They couldn't believe that a mere Demon earl would be so audacious and fearless as to steal something from a demon duke.

Chapter 689 689- Enemies On A Narrow Road (3)

While some demons were enjoying the misery of the Demon Earl, a few even laughed out loud unable to contain their laughter. They knew full well what kind of character Famoon was and what was he referring to with the word artefact.

Being a high ranking demon and a Demon Lord, how could Belial not know what sort of items the latter bought from the auction? He knew full well that this clown of a Duke got scammed by the merchant of the Damned.

However, that being said, being a demon lord who claimed to uphold justice and lead all the demons, he must amend justice for him. As such, Belial turned towards Simon, so did all eyes present in the venue. They all turned toward the accused, awaiting his defence.

On Simon's side, the Demon himself and Oswald both wore a frown of consternation, feeling a headache coming. If it was just Duke Arctaus' accusation they could have somehow dealt with it.

However, Famoon also had to join in at this moment making the situation even more troublesome for them.

"I want to know how did it come to this but first of all, who is this demon? Why is he tangling and making things difficult for you" Oswald scratched his hair in frustration. The situation was so messed up that even with his wits, he couldn't find a solution out of this.

"Even if you ask me, I don't know" Simon himself was confused as to why this demon was trying to make things difficult for him. He did not recognise the other party nor did he have any enmity with him so why?

It needs to be mentioned that Simon had never met Avrox as such, he was largely clueless as to who the other party was.

"I see.. that aside, how will you deal with this situation? Do you have any plans?".

Simon simply shook his head at Oswald's question and replied with a 'I will deal with it somehow attitude'.

With a mixture of frustration and annoyance etched upon his countenance, Simon addressed the gathered assembly "Demon Lord, noble demons, I vehemently deny the allegations made against me by Duke Arctaurus and Duke Famoon".

"Neither I nor my subordinate have done something to force the Duke's subordinate to nullify the contract. The latter came to us on their own will. As for the matter of Duke Famoon's artefact, I did not steal it rather I took it from the other party with my own ability. It was Duke Famoon who came to me with the intention to steal my subordinate."

"Nonsense, if you haven't done something, then why is my subordinate behaving like that"...

"Right, Demon lord he speaking nonsense. I did not do such things"...

"Earl Simon you shouldn't accuse someone falsely"...

Duke Arctaurus and Duke Famoon vehemently tried to accuse Simon while Avrox supported them.

On Simon's side, Oswald stood firm in defending his friend. The tension among the parties was starting to escalate when Belial raised his hand, signalling for calm. His voice carried a pressure that demanded obedience from all demons present in the venue.

"Let us not jump to conclusions without a fair examination of the evidence and a thorough investigation. Accusations and counter-accusations will not lead us to the truth. I assure everyone that justice will be amended. However, before that we need to investigate the allegations made by both sides".

Seeing that the rowdy crowd had been silenced, Belial continued "Now then, which side will speak first?".

Avrox, waiting for his chance, spoke on behalf of Duke Arctaurus and Duke Famoon.

"Demon Lord, we have witnessed the behaviour of the Giga Minotaurus which changed right after the Ritual of the Blades. It is evident that there is some manipulation at play here, and the stolen artefact from Duke Famoon only adds to the suspicion against Earl Simon."

Belial nodded his head and turned towards Simon to hear what he had to say.

"Demon Lord, I stand by my words. The actions of Duke Arctaurus's subordinate are the consequences of their own will. They have acted of their own accord and have nothing to do with my subordinate. As for Duke Famoon's alleged theft, I assert that I acquired the artefact through my own abilities and it was not stolen from him."

It was not a lie, the subordinate of Duke Arctaurus, the Giga Minotaurus came to them even after Myabell released her familiar covenant and as for Duke Famoon, the latter got what he deserved. I think you should take a look at

The Eye of Enimga or in other words, the Celestial Oculairs had chosen Simon as its master and bound itself with him. As such, the item became his possession. There was no way he was going to give an item back that fell into his possession.

"I see, so you will still shamelessly deny all accusations. You have degraded the face of all of us Demon Earls" Avrox determined to further his agenda, spoke once again.

"Demon Lord, I beseech you to consider the evidence before you. Earl Simon's claims are baseless and his attempts to shift blame onto Duke Arctaurus and Duke Famoon are nothing but a desperate ploy. We have witnessed the chaos caused by his subordinate, the change in behaviour of the Giga Minotaurus, and we have heard the allegations of the stolen artefact".

"It is clear where the guilt lies. I would also like to implore Duke Oswell to see through Earl Simon's deceit. His actions have caused discord and unrest within our realm. By siding with him, we risk undermining the very foundation of justice and order that we strive to uphold."

Avrox wanted to use this chance and influence Oswell to discard Simon and cut off all support the latter had. However, what he didn't know was that contrary to their expectation Oswell wasn't using Simon as a pawn to do his bidding but was instead genuinely helping his friend.

Even though he had the choice of backing down, he was involving himself more and more in this perilous situation just to help his friend.

"Earl Avrox, you with your humble rank speak as if you know everything. However, aren't you just being biased towards Earl Simon and using this chance to gain the favour of the two Dukes?"

"You say that the Gga Minotaurus'behaviour changed after the Ritual of the Blades? Then why didn't we all who have witnessed the Ritual of the Blades with our own eyes, did not sense anything? Or Earl Avrox are you trying to say that your perception ability is even better than the Demon Lord and the Ancient Archdukes here?"

"As for the matter regarding Famoon, I was there too. As such, I can testify that he was the one who came with ill intentions first. There were a few demons nearby at that time. If Demon Lord investigates them, I'm sure you will easily be able to find the truth" Oswell flashed a thumbs up towards Simon and stood resolutely beside him.

This caused the two dukes and Avrox to be taken aback. They couldn't understand why Oswell was supporting this demon earl so strongly.

The arbiter in this matter, Belial was torn between upholding justice and maintaining a delicate balance of power. On one side was Duke Arctaurus, Duke Famoon and the subordinate of Archduke

Charthros, and on another Oswald, a demon who even while being just a demon duke could compete with many of the ancient Demon Archdukes.

Both sides were important to him if he wanted to rule the demon continent. As such, he couldn't just dismiss any one party.

To further complex the situation, his father Demon Archduke Gareth sent him a sound transmission informing him of a special presence observing the gathering.

Belial took a moment to gather all the thoughts racing in his mind before addressing the gathered demons.

"In light of all the new information presented, it is clear that both parties were at fault for this one. And so to amend an impartial and fair justice I ask both the parties to compromise on this one".

"Duke Oswald, Earl Simon... I understand that the matter with Duke Famoona was a personal feud. As such, I will not hold you charge for this matter as long as you reimburse the Duke with an appropriate amount of DP. As for the matter relating to the subordinate of Duke Arctaurus, I will have you return the Giga Minotaurus to them".

Belial gave his verdict forcing both the parties into a compromise. However, was his justice really fair and impartial to everyone? Of course it was not, it was heavily biased towards Simon who was just a Demon Earl and favoured the Demon Dukes.

So what if he had the backing of Oswald? In the end, he was still a mere Demon Earl whose position and importance was incomparable to the influential Demon Dukes.

Had it been Oswald or some other Demon Duke in place of him, Belial wouldn't have given such a verdict. However, all those charges and allegations were on a Demon Earl. As such, one didn't need to think twice to know, which side the demon lord would support.

In the society of Demon Nobles, your standing decided your fate. If you are a high ranking demon and possess immense power, you will be respected by all the demons. Heck, others might even be fawning over you to get to your good side.

Just like how all the demons here wanted to make a connection with Oswald. However, if you are just a bottom ranking demon earl whose place was merely to be a subordinate of the high ranking demons, you have no standing in this society.

Forget about being heard in a gathering like this, even if you were oppressed and took advantage of, nobody would bat an eye.

Chapter 690 690- Suppressing the Crowd

If your standing is low, your fate would be subjected to the whims and manipulations of the more powerful. That was how the society of the demon worked. In essence, it still retained the primal form of law, the law of the jungle.

A gathering like the Hexennacht serves as a vivid reminder of this stark reality. Only the high-ranking demons here dominate the scene, a Demon Earl like Simon has no place.

Just like how right now he was forced to have the short end of the stick because the Demon Lord saw no worth in siding with a Demon Earl like him.

Of course, it was not like Belial did not put any consideration into his verdict. In fact, he had taken Oswald's standing into account because he didn't want his relation with the latter to break down, he gave that verdict. Or else, given Simon's standing, simply suffering from some concessions wouldn't be the end for him.

However, all of that did not matter to Simon anymore at this moment because something that he had been suppressing all this time, finally broke loose. Something within him snapped ...

[Ding... Pride has been activated, all other emotions are being suppressed].

Although Simon tried to keep his calm since the beginning of this farce, but as the situation went on and after that biased verdict from Belial, he could no longer keep it together.

The Fragments of Pride activated at the injustice and quickly overwhelmed Simon. All of his emotions disappeared, his hesitation, It was as if a switch had been flipped, overwhelming arrogance surged through his veins, altering his very aura. His ego swelled to uncertainties, doubts everything was swept away replaced by an unwavering belief in his own worth and capabilities.

It was as if a switch had been flipped, overwhelming arrogance surged through his veins, altering his very aura. His ego swelled to colossal proportions, fueling a sense of superiority that bordered on the excessive.

With each passing moment, his egoism grew more pronounced, casting a shadow over his once modest demeanour.

"Haah!... What bullshit is this?"...

Simon who had been silent up until this moment, suddenly spoke up. His voice, which was calm and composed up until now, carried an undeniable edge, resonating with a quiet strength.

"What did you say?!" Duke Arctaurus and Famoon who were revelling at Belial's verdict that clearly favoured them, turned towards the Demon Earl with furrowed brows unable to believe what he just said.

"I said... what bullshit is this. Why should I be the one to compromise for insignificant fools like you all?" Simon repeated himself.

When his words dripping with overwhelming arrogance, reached the ears of the onlooking crowd, it was as if the entire venue was turned upside down. A silence palpable enough for one to even hear their breathing, descended on the venue.

Though it didn't last long before a collective gasp rippled through the assembly. Whispers and murmurs quickly spread like wildfire, filled with disbelief and uncertainty. Doubt hung heavy in the air as the audience questioned whether they had truly heard what they thought they had heard.

"Earl Simon, what is the meaning of this?"

Belial who never thought that an unassuming Demon Earl would go against his verdict, was annoyed. Faint traces of his powerful energy even started leaking out of his body as if wanting to squash this ant that dared to against his will into smithereens.

However, when he faced the Demon Earl this time, he realised that something about the other party was different. It was as if he was dealing with a completely different demon than before.

Not only that, but in front of that aura emanated by that Demon Earl, he felt a heavy sense of oppression that generated from deep within his soul. Additionally, his energy which was on the verge of bursting out of his body, had suddenly become stagnant and swiftly receded inside his body as if seeking shelter.

'What was going on?' Belial wondered in astonishment. It was not only him, all the demon nobles in the venue regardless of their ranks felt a heavy sense of pressure bearing down on them when facing the Demon Earl for some reason.

If it was before, hearing the rough and foolhardy words of the Demon Earl, the entire hall would have erupted in amusement and laughter. However, the environment in the Venue was tense with an inexplicable heaviness enveloping the place.

At this moment, when the crowd was still grappling with their own perceptions, struggling to reconcile the humble demon they saw before with the audacious individual standing before them, Simon spoke once again.

"Listen up, you pathetic excuses for demons. I stand here before you as the victor of the Ritual of the Blades, a title that grants me absolute authority over the outcome at hand which also includes the defeated party"

His words dripped with condescension, and a blatant disregard for the feelings and opinions of others.

"You see, the rules of this pitiful ritual are crystal clear. The winner claims not only the territory but also the spoils of the battle. The defeated must bow down in submission and accept their fate." A sinister smirk formed on Simon's lips as he gazed at Duke Arctaurus.

"The weak will always be subjected to the whims of the strong. It is the natural order of our world and how we the demon nobles do things isn't it? Then as the loser, Duke Arctaurus what rights do you have to throw all those accusations on me? Even if I take your [A] rank subordinate, you shouldn't have any complaints".

In front of Simon's verbal assaults, the entire venue was stunned silent. The contrast between the Demon Earl's previous demeanour and this newfound arrogance was so stark that it defied all rational explanation.

It was a jarring juxtaposition that challenged all their preconceived notion. The confidence with which he belittled them was both astonishing and enraging. However, facing his gaze none of the demons present were able to do anything.

They could feel an intense suppression bearing down on them, as if the very essence of their being was scared of him.

The weight of his presence was so that it commanded attention and submission from those around him. In front of that Simon, all everyone could do was take it lying down.

With a twisted smile on his face, Simon turned his attention towards Duke Arctaurus, who stood there, seething with anger and humiliation.

"How pitiful, Duke Arctaurus" he sneered "Your precious Giga Minotaurus, once so loyal, now refuses to obey your feeble commands. How amusing it is to see you blaming me for your own incompetence. Now that it has nullified the contract with you, you go crying to the Demon Lord to amend justice. You spineless fool, learn to accept your defeat. Don't worry though, I shall graciously accept your defeated subordinate. It will serve as a constant reminder of your inadequacy and my superiority to everyone".

"Ah, also Duke Famoon the crybaby who cannot handle a loss" Finished humiliating Duke Arctaurus, Simon's eyes shifted towards Famoon.

"I stole something from you? Is that why you have come to the Hexennacht, seeking justice for a petty squabble?".

Simon taunted, his voice filled with mocking laughter "You dare accuse me of stealing? How absurd. I took what was rightfully mine, with my own abilities. Your feeble attempts to reclaim it with Belial's help only prove your own weakness. Cry all you want, but it will not change the fact that you lost, and I won."

While Simon continued to humiliate his adversaries, driving each syllable deeper into their wounded pride, those near him looked at him in astonishment. This was especially true for Theodore and Maybell, his loyal subordinates who were like a family to him.

At this moment, they had their eyes wide open in surprise and disbelief. This was a side of Simon they had never seen before- a being consumed by arrogance.

They had always known him as a kind and cool master, someone who valued their loyalty and treated them with great care. But what they witnessed today was a stark contrast from the master they thought they knew.

"Brother, what is going on with master?!"

Maybell, usually quiet and reserved, found herself taken aback by the overwhelming aura of arrogance emanating from Simon. Her expression shifted from surprise to concern as she struggled to reconcile this new side of her master with the one she was so familiar with.

In her concern, she could only turn to her brother who was the perceptive one between them.

"Don't worry, I think I know why Master is like this" Theodore reassured his sister. He who had been silently standing beside Simon, felt something change within him. It was not like he had no idea what triggered that change.

Just like how the Valkyries could see Simon from that special void before they were summoned, Theodore and Maybell too shared a similar view from the place they were summoned from and thus knew about the special fragments that were within their master.

This was not the first time such a change had occurred. Thought that said, he still felt a pang of confusion and unease. The reason for that was because, unlike the other times when Simon acted haughty and confident when under the effects of the fragment, this time it looked like he was completely consumed by it.

This excessive arrogance that reached unparalleled heights and held nothing but pure disdain for others, even shook him to his core.

Theodore's observation was right, usually even when under the effect of the Fragment of Pride, Simon wouldn't usually be completely consumed by it until he was no longer himself. He would still have a little bit of self control remaining.

However, that was before he acquired the second fragment of pride.