

D. of Pride 751

Chapter 751 751- The Colossal Shadow

Take Duke Megera from the Hexennacht for example, he was an influential Demon Duke who had lived for more than 1500 years. His fight with the Commander of Envy, went on for 2 days straight with most of his injuries, even the most dire ones healing in a couple of seconds.

From this, one could tell what kind of realm level 700 and above was. However, for a single magic to contain enough might to kill them, it could be said that it was unprecedented in the current era.

What was even more shocking was that the wielder of such a magic was none other than a Demon Earl, a rank that was two stages lower than them.

Simon clenched his hands, feeling a rush of exhilaration course through his body. He knew better than anyone that it was impossible for an Amalgamation magic of two attributes, one of which was even a novice tier to possess that kind of might.

It was only possible because Simon had the [Shortcuts] option. It was because of this feature that he was able to empower the magic with mana every day. However, it was not just his own mana that made the magic so strong, the option that had undergone a drastic change after transmigrating to this world, also had something to do with the insane power of that magic.

It would be impossible for others to replicate what Simon did without the [Shortcuts] option.

Next, Simon shifted his eyes at the lines of notification that appeared before him. Most of it was his level up announcements. Defeating Abomination, a being of level 740 had rewarded him with a ton of experience, enough to fill up his experience bar multiple times.

[You have reached the limit of your bloodline, your level cannot progress any further. The Exp threshold exceeds the limit, storing it away temporarily].

Simon glanced at his status and noticed that he had reached level 600, the limit of the Demon Earl. If he wanted to progress any further, he would have to use the Purifying Crystal Essence to [Promote] his character and purify his bloodline to the next rank.

Demon Marquess... a rank that was the dream of countless low ranking demon nobles, Simon was finally going to achieve it. How long did it take him?

Counting the time since the moment he arrived in his world, it wouldn't be more than five years. That is to say, in just less than five years, Simon had reached the threshold of Demon Marquess from Demon Baron.

A growth like that, it was simply heaven defying. It also went on to show how powerful the Fragments of Pride were to elevate his growth to such speed.

Simon took a while to reminisce about the journey he went through to reach this stage. Five years, it might be extremely short given the fact that even the low ranking demon nobles live for a few hundred years, not to mention the pure blood and high ranking ones.

The years he lived might have been short; however, the experiences he had gone through was very rich. Even some Demon Dukes might not be able to compare to him in that aspect.

Simon was in no hurry to [Promote] his rank, he still had a few skills that he needed to acquire before reaching the Demon Marquess rank. As such, he put the Promotion at the back of his head and focused on the matter at hand.

Other than the level up notification, he also received an announcement from the Forbidden Grounds that marked his successful clearance of the Trial.

[The Sixth Trail has been cleared. Number of participants remaining:- 1. Your actions and Karma are being recorded. Calculating your reward... your reward has been set. Proceed through the gate to experience the [Historia] and collect your reward].

With the defeat of the Abomination, Simon had successfully cleared the Sixth Trail: Open Space Snowlands.

Tens of kilometres in front of him, the land which was the epicentre of the magic had been reduced to nothing but barren sands, a teleportation gate fluctuating with spatial powers, formed. This was his exit from here.

Simon got up and walked towards the spatial gate, of course, he didn't forget to collect his other reward, the rewards that he got from defeating the Fourth Finger.

The finger of Ozymandias, just like the one sitting inside his space ring, was buried underneath a pile of sand. Even after getting caught in that explosion, it didn't appear that the body of the finger took much damage.

And whatever damage it took, was all healed by the curse energy oozing from it. From this, one could tell how absurdly strong defence the fingers possessed. Perhaps if he didn't restore the Radiant Crown of Brilliance, then he wouldn't have been able to defeat the fourth finger.

This realisation made Simon sigh a breath of relief. His intuitions were right, there was a good reason why he received the crown and the materials to restore it as a clear reward. The crown has a much greater purpose and would be an essential item in the future trials.

Using the Philosopher's Stone that stored Irene's Magic, Simon sealed the Finger in the ice coffin and stored it away.

With that, he proceeded forward and entered the teleportation gate. The next thing he knew, he was already inside the [Historia], experiencing a part of history that was lost with time.

His hands and body became illusory like he was a ghost watching everything as a bystander. As he looked around, he noticed that he was standing on top of a wide expanse of land, the grass beneath his feet was a vibrant shade of green, stretching out as far as the eye could see.

It was a stark contrast to the desolation he had witnessed moments ago in the snowlands. The land here was also teeming with life, colourful wildflowers swayed gently in the breeze, and the air was filled with a relaxing atmosphere.

The scent of blooming flowers and the earthy fragrance of the grass combined to create a mesmerising scene that was both refreshing and invigorating.

As he took in the scenery, Simon couldn't help but feel a sense of familiarity with this place, as if he had seen it somewhere before.

"This place..." he muttered to himself. The similarity between this place and the snowlands he had been in just moments ago was too uncanny.

"Could it be the same place?"

While the climate and surroundings were polar opposites, there was an undeniable familiarity in the geography. Especially that majestic mountain range in the distance that rose to the sky like an ancient sentinel of the land.

There was no doubt about it, this place was the Snowlands he was just in. How did such a vast verdant land transform into the snowlands that it was now?

Simon did not have to think much as the answer soon presented itself in front of him.

The land began to tremble and soon after, breaking through the ground, numerous dark black sinister looking appendages appeared followed by a monstrous form. It was the Abomination, the creature he just defeated to clear the Sixth Trial.

Its presence was sinister, and its emergence tainted the once-vibrant landscape. It wasn't alone, following the path it created, more and more nightmarish looking entities burst forth from the ground, each more grotesque than the last.

Some had twisted, elongated limbs, while others had multiple sets of eyes that gleamed with malevolence. Some even had figures that eerily resembled a human.

As Simon glanced at those figures breaking out of the ground, a chilling revelation struck him like a bolt of lightning. He realised that he had seen them before, although it was just once, the thing he saw then left a deep impression in his mind.

Scenes from the Third Trial resurfaced from his memories once again. That's right, these nightmarish looking entities were none other than the children from the third trial who were experimented upon and later deemed a failure and frozen inside that ice wall.

The sight of that unimaginable despair, one that had left an indelible mark on his consciousness.

In the depths of that facility, the enormous Frozen Prison that trapped thousands of children, once filled with hope and innocence, within its icy embrace. Their forms were grotesque and savage, twisted by the cruel experiments they had endured.

Each child's face bore the haunting visage of a mindless beast, a creature that had lost all semblance of humanity. Their eyes, once filled with dreams and aspirations, were vacant and hollow.

Their mouths, frozen in eternal torment, seemed to emit silent screams that echoed through the icy chamber. Limbs contorted into unnatural shapes, and their bodies bore the scars of countless experiments.

It was a wretched tableau of suffering and despair, a stark reminder of the atrocities committed in the name of twisted ambition.

There was no need to guess, this [Historia] was a continuation from back then. At that time, the [Historia] ended abruptly leaving Simon and the group he came in with, Lucine and Denzel in an unclear and inconclusive state of mind.

At that time, he wondered what happened of the children that raised the spark of resistance against those mad scientists. Were they able to survive or not, what happened to that teleport circle that was their only exit out of there and the despair inducing Abomination?

When he reached the depth of the facility after witnessing the [Historia] everything had changed. There was no way of knowing what had happened back then, and many questions remained unanswered at that time.

Chapter 752 752- White Dragon

Now, as these grotesque entities, once human children, emerged from the ground, it was a grim revelation.

The answer to one of those haunting questions lay before him, and it was a harrowing sight. The Abomination, the source of unimaginable despair, had now broken free from its prison. It was obvious what happened next, a scene of mayhem and destruction unfolded.

With the emergence of the Abomination and the monstrous legion that it led, it triggered a series of events. Numerous groups and nations rallied together to confront and defeat the newfound threat.

However, the grim reality soon became apparent. Despite their combined might, the assembled forces were no match for the sheer terror unleashed by the Abomination and its grotesque minions.

It was a slaughter, a relentless onslaught that left no room for hope. Multiple nations, each with their proud histories and formidable strength, were reduced to little more than rubble in the wake of the nightmarish legion.

Like a record that played in fast forward, Simon observed everything that transpired in that land. He was like a bystander who couldn't intervene and could only watch as the world crumbled.

No group, no matter how skilled or well-equipped, stood a chance against the overwhelming power of the Abomination and its monstrous horde. It was a relentless march of death and destruction, and it seemed as though the entire region would be turned into a graveyard.

When it appeared that the land was destined to be doomed, the sky darkened all of a sudden. An unusual transformation occurred, thick arctic clouds appeared in the sky as if a storm was brewing.

An enormous shadow loomed above the thick, roiling clouds, casting an eerie pall over the already devastated landscape. The temperature in the surroundings began to plummet, it was so fast that those on the battlefield hardly had any time to register it.

A bone-chilling cold settled over the area, causing the warriors facing the legion to shiver uncontrollably. Then, without warning, the skies opened up, unleashing a snowfall unlike any other.

These were not ordinary snowflakes, delicate and harmless. No, these flakes were enormous, each one the size of a man's hand, and they fell in a blizzard so thick it was almost impossible to see beyond a few feet.

Within moments, the ground was blanketed in a pristine, unbroken layer of snow. It was a transformation of extraordinary speed and magnitude. The land that had once been a lush and vibrant expanse was now submerged beneath a sea of white.

Trees, buildings, and entire landscapes vanished beneath the onslaught of snow, as if nature itself was reclaiming the territory. The transformation was so fast that everyone was left bewildered, including the bystander Simon.

For such a vast expanse of land to get covered in snow in just a matter of seconds, was clearly unnatural, ominous even. Some kind of force had to have intervened.

The clearly sentient Abomination and the warriors facing the legion must have also realised it as they turned to look at the enormous shadow looming above the clouds.

Simon followed their gaze and looked at the sky, at that very instant, his heart stopped beating. The reason—Inside the billowing clouds that now shrouded the heavens, a pair of piercing, luminous eyes had manifested.

They were eyes that held the weight of the world, a gaze so overbearingly oppressive that it seemed capable of crushing the very spirit of those who dared to look upon them. The effect was instant and devastating.

Among the warriors on the battlefield, low-leveled ones crumpled to the ground, blood oozing from their seven orifices, as if their very minds had been shattered. The stronger individuals clutched their heads, their eyes wide with madness, behaving erratically as though their sanity had been robbed.

It was not only the side of the resistance that was affected, the legion led by the Abomination was not spared either. These subjects who were already taken over by insanity, after losing their mind went completely berserk. They no longer followed the command of the Abomination and started tearing each other apart.

A single glance at those eyes and the tide of the battlefield completely changed. There was no way of knowing which side was winning now. Both sides suffered heavy casualties.

It begs mentioning that this was not an attack, not in the conventional sense. No magic or skills were cast, and no weapons were wielded. Just the sheer presence of those eyes of the entity hidden within the clouds, was enough to inflict excruciating mental strain upon all who beheld them.

It was as though an unbearable weight had settled upon their souls, driving some to the brink of madness and rendering others helpless in the face of this overwhelming force.

Even Simon who was witnessing the [Historia], felt his heart stop and his soul shudder the very moment he gazed at those enormous eyes. It was as if he was being pressed by an oppressive force and was slowly being crushed.

Thankfully, he did not continue gazing at those eyes and shifted his attention away, causing the oppressive pressure to disappear. Simon sighed a breath of relief, that kind of intense overwhelming feeling left a deep mark on his face.

It was as if he had momentarily glimpsed the true depths of despair. He couldn't help but shudder at the thought of what he had just witnessed. This was supposed to be a record of a distant history, a mere glimpse into the past. Yet, even though he had only seen an image of that entity recorded in the [Historia], the overwhelming sense of dread it had invoked was unparalleled.

There was no doubt in his mind that the entity looming above the clouds was anything but ordinary.

While Simon sorted his thoughts, trying to suppress the lingering dread from the scene before, the [Historia] continued. Chaos reigned on the battlefield, the relentless pressure emanating from those eyes had sent both sides into a frenzy.

Some warriors had lost their sanity entirely, attacking anything in their path, while others cowered in terror, unable to lift their weapons. Then, as if in response to this pandemonium, the very heavens themselves seemed to stir.

The clouds above rumbled and roiled, a portentous omen that something momentous was about to occur. The atmosphere grew heavy with anticipation, and the air crackled with the agitated mystical energy.

RUMBLE... Suddenly, a loud thunderclap resounded and the clouds in the centre parted away, giving way for an awe-inspiring head to emerge. It was a colossal dragon head, its silvery white scales gleaming like polished armour.

The sheer presence of this titanic entity could overshadow this entire land. Its eyes, a brilliant shade of blue, held endless profoundness and power, exuding overbearing regality as they fixated upon the chaotic battlefield below.

Eight majestic horns protruded from its regal head, each one a testament to its ancient and unparalleled power. Its powerful jaws, adorned with rows of razor-sharp teeth, hinted at the devastating might it possessed.

The dragon opened its mouth and gave a deafening roar that reverberated through the core of existence.

At that instant, a miraculous and unbelievable event occurred. Time itself seemed to come to a standstill, as if someone had pressed the pause button.

Everything, from the falling snow that suspended in mid-air, forming a crystalline canopy over the battlefield, to warriors and monsters who looked like lifeless statues. Blood spurting from their wounds suspended in eerie crimson stalactites. Everything froze in an instant.

And then, a crackling noise resembling the sound of ice forming, pierced through the air and a wave of freezing coldness washed over everything. It was as if the very land had succumbed to the icy touch of the bone freezing frost.

The warriors, the grotesque subjects, and the Abomination were all encapsulated in a sheath of ice, forever frozen to their bones. Even Space itself was no exception to this phenomenon. It, too, was frozen, with even the mystical energies that coursed through it brought to a standstill.

Watching everything from his position as a bystander, Simon could hardly believe his eyes. Everything was over just like that? The Abomination and the nightmarish legion that represented an eminent danger, was resolved just like that?

It all happened in the blink of an eye, the entire battlefield was trapped in a grand montage of suspended animation.

"Unbelievable..." Simon muttered under his breath.

The arrival of that dragon, their awe inspiring visage and unfathomable power that could even freeze the time, it was a display of breathtaking dominance.

He finally found the answer to the question—how this seemingly beautiful land changed into the barren Snowlands it was now.

It was because of the dragon that came to stop the abomination and its legion. Its powers were so great that it even affected the land and its climate, altering it forever into a winter land.

It took Simon a moment to take everything in, by the time he gazed at the sky again, the dragon had already disappeared. That silvery white visage, that regal appearance, although it was only for a very short period of time that he looked at that dragon, but it left a deep impression on him.

It was not like he had not seen a dragon before, the Earth Shattering Lower Dragon in his dungeon was also a dragon and although it obtained some dragon bloodline through a lucky encounter, the Lightning Draconic Serpent can also be considered from the dragon lineage.

However, the ones in his dungeon couldn't be compared to the white dragon he just saw.

Chapter 753 753- Three Months?!!

There was an insurmountable gap between them. It was like comparing a Demon Archduke with a Demon Baron.

From the Lightning Draconic Serpent, Simon had some understanding of the dragon clan. Just like the demon nobles, they had their own ranks, called the Growth Phases—Infant, Juvenile, Adult and Elder.

The White dragon he saw was at the very least an Elder Dragon or probably even stronger. Maybe as strong as Adalinada and Lucine. The realm at which the white dragon and the two he mentioned were, was still too far away from him. As such, it was difficult to make an assumption.

Now that most of the puzzles and answers were solved, Simon thought that the [Historia] would end here. However, to his surprise, it still continued.

Snow continued to fall in this part of the land in a never ending manner and day and night alternated many times in the blink of an eye. Finally, there was some movement after an unknown period of time.

Marching through the bellowing snowstorm, a figure could be seen walking towards an entity frozen in layers of ice. The passage of time had already eroded most of the ice statues except for one, the Abomination.

The figure stopped in front of the Abomination and took out something from their space ring. Simon glanced at the figure and noticed that they were donned in a pure white robe that covered their figure from head to toe.

Although they concealed their appearance, one could still see their long, bright golden hair move down from underneath their hood as they moved. Simon strained his eyes, wanting to see who the figure was. However, before he could get a good glance at the figure, the vision in front of him wavered and the [Historia] ended abruptly.

The surreal scenes of the snowlands, the abomination, and the enigmatic figure in the white robe dissolved like mist. In their place, Simon found himself surrounded by old, rusty walls that seemed to enclose him in a moderately-sized chamber.

The atmosphere was heavy with antiquity, bearing the weight of forgotten time. The room was devoid of any notable features, save for the dais situated at the far end of this chamber.

As Simon slowly approached the dais, he couldn't help but be drawn at the thing that lay atop it.

At first glance, it appeared to be a gemstone, its multifaceted surface glistening with an otherworldly radiance. However, upon closer inspection, he realized that it was unlike any other gemstones he had ever seen.

One end of this peculiar object was connected to a small wand-like extension, forming an intricate and enigmatic design. He reached out and picked up the object, feeling its weight in his hand.

It was, indeed, a pen, but not just any pen. Its body seemed to be crafted from an ancient wood that bore the marks of countless years, its surface was adorned with intricate carvings, symbols that held meaning beyond his comprehension.

Holding it, Simon felt its uniqueness and tried to inspect it with his [Appraisal]. But just as he expected, the skill was unable to show any information about this thing.

He wanted to investigate more about the pen; however, before he could, he felt a strange sensation coming from his space ring.

The Echomir Plate sitting inside his space ring, was starting to act up at this moment. What was going on? Did something happen to his dungeon?

The ability of the Echomir plates was to transmit messages. When one writes something on the surface of these plates, the same thing would appear on another plate. What's more, it was not constrained by distance, as such, as long as both the parties possessed these plates, they could communicate with each other.

Before coming to the forbidden grounds Simon had given one of the plates to Irene to use it in case something happened to the dungeon. For her to use the Echomir Plates, something must have happened.

Cannot be bothered with the mysteries of the pen anymore, Simon quickly put it away. Because his mind was currently held up with something else, he failed to notice the gemstone on the end of the pen to shine faintly right before it was put away inside his [Inventory].

Simon took out the Echomir Plate from his space ring and his eyes immediately hardened when he read the message.

[Return to the dungeon]

Although the message was short, the content was urgent. For Irene to write such a message, his dungeon might really be in danger. A sense of urgency gripped Simon, he stopped whatever he was doing and took out the Transit Stones.

Just a few meters away from him was the teleportation circle that led further into the trial. However, right now was not the time to continue with his training. He needed to get back to his dungeon as soon as possible.

And so, Simon crushed the rock in his hand and was enveloped by the spatial laws of the forbidden grounds.

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Dungeon Laplace, Main Floor, White Palace.

Sitting inside the hall, was Irene, Cecilia, the Valkyries and the twins.

"It has been more than three months since he is gone. Is Big Brother alright?" Cecilia who was snuggling to Irene for comfort, asked with watery eyes. Her face was masked with worry and anxiousness.

It was not only her, everyone in the hall had a face that showed how worried they were.

"Don't worry, your big brother is alright. Although he tends to do dangerous things, he always makes sure to come back alive. This time will be no different. Perhaps, he got caught up in his training so much that he even forgot the passage of time. I have already sent him a message he should be arriving soon"

Irene consoled, gently brushing Cecilia's emerald green hair.

"Miss Irene is right, there is no way anything would happen to Master" All the Valkyries nodded at Annette's confident words. These sisters had an unbreakable faith in their master.

"Uh-huh... there is no way Master is in danger. Sister Cecilia is thinking too much, what a worrywart"

Theodore shrugged his shoulders. His comment caused Cecilia to erupt into fury and the two started bickering again. This was not an unusual scene in the dungeon, the two children who were not too far apart in age fought like the kids they were. The others were already used to it.

Irene sighed and shifted her attention to Annette "Anyways, how is the investigation going? Have we found the culprit yet?".

The battle maid pushed her spectacles up and shook her head "They are still at it. Although they have found some clues there are no conclusive leads yet".

"I see... tell them to keep investigating. We need to solve this problem soon or else the dungeon would really be in danger. It might take him some time to come, we must... oh?!!"

Irene who was passing out instructions, stopped halfway and glanced at a certain direction of the Main Floor.

"Talk of the devil... he is here" A beautiful smile bloomed on her face as she said that.

"What?!!" When others heard that, they all made a pleasant surprised face and hurriedly exited the hall. All of them missed their master very much and wanted to greet him.

The entrance to the white palace was pushed open and Simon swiftly walked in. The moment he entered... "Welcome back".

He saw all of his subordinates standing in front of him greeting him with all kinds of expressive and delighted faces.

Simon smiled, touched by their genuine concern "Yeah, I am back".

Afterwards, he was pulled by Cecilia and the twins who snuggled up to him and was forced to pamper them.

"Alright.. alright, don't push each other, I can carry all of you" Simon took all of them to the main hall and sat down. He then glanced at Irene and asked with a solemn tone "The message you sent...".

"You just came back from your training, rest for a while. We can talk about other stuff later".

Simon nodded his head and started answering the question of his subordinates who were full of curiosity about the forbidden grounds.

"Master... is the Forbidden Grounds a place full of wondrous and surprising things like the outside world?"...

"Master, why did you take so long to come back? Was your training successful?"...

"Master, can you take me with you next time? I want to see what kind of place the forbidden grounds is"...

"Master, were the trials challenging? You aren't hurt are you?".

All sorts of questions bombarded him. Some were related to his health but most of them were just filled with curiosity about the outside world.

From their questions Simon realised one thing... these people, they have been holed up inside the dungeon for so long and have never witnessed the outside world. Those that did, only went around the forest and never out of it.

Perhaps, he should let them go out on a mission and let them broaden their horizons. Simon made a mental note to send some of his subordinates out to experience the world for themselves when an opportunity arrives.

"Alright everyone, enough with your silly questions. Master just arrived, can't you see that he is exhausted from his training. Give him some breathing room" Being the elder sister for everyone, Annette pulled all those people snuggling up to him like pandas away.

"That' right, give master some breathing room... sniff...sniff"...

"You are not the one to talk"

Smack... Annette smacked the tightly clinging Bea away whose protests were more aggressive than the children.

Chapter 754 754- Three Months?!! (2)

"Master, would you like me to prepare a bath for you?"...

"Ah, that would be ideal, please do so Annette"...

"Leave it to me, master".

Simon enjoyed a hot bath and felt his muscles and body relaxing. Inside the forbidden grounds, he was constantly surrounded by dangers, he couldn't even relax for a single second as every mistake there meant death.

His senses and nerves had been stretched taut every single second that he was there. Now that he was out, he could finally relax a little.

Simon glanced at the golden lion head that was gushing hot water from its open mouth. There were eight of them all around the bath. This was the thing about the bathhouse of the white palace, When Simon created the palace, he designed the bathhouses with the most extravagance of things.

It was not only the bathhouse, the other recreational areas were the same.

After spending an enjoyable time and washing away all of his exhaustion, Simon arrived at the dining table where everyone was waiting for him.

"Master... sit here, we have prepared all sorts of dishes that we know you like"

Annette led him to his seat. The battle maids were programmed by him to be excellent maids, as such, they knew how to cook all kinds of dishes.

After sharing a delicious meal with everyone, the mood became light-hearted. Everyone started chatting in a cheery and carefree manner. Simon savoured these small happy moments, allowing himself to indulge in it for once in a while.

Afterwards, they moved back to the Main Hall to discuss some important matters.

"Irene, is the dungeon alright? Is it in danger?" Simon asked the question in his mind. The message that Irene sent to him had an urgent tone to it. Given that he had instructed her to use the Echomir Plates during an emergency, he believed that something must have occurred while he was gone.

However, the answer he received shocked him.

"The dungeon is operating fine, it cannot be said that the situation has reached a point where it would be considered in danger" Irene replied.

Hearing her answer, Simon blinked in a daze "Then about the urgent message you sent me?"...

"That was because you have been gone for more than three months, everyone was worried about you. When you left, you said that you were going out to train. However, you didn't say that it would take you a long time. Naturally, I contacted you to know if you were safe or not".

Gone for more than three months? What is she talking about?

Although there was no day and night in the trials of the Forbidden Grounds, Simon still made sure to keep track of time. From what he could tell, it should only be a little over a week that he spent there.

However, Irene told him that he was gone for three months. Remembering the anxious and delighted faces of his subordinates after he came back, he felt like the emotions they showed were much too intense for someone who had been gone for only over a week.

There was no reason for Irene to lie too which could only mean that he was really on the forbidden grounds for more than three months.

Simon hurriedly opened his [Inventory] and saw three shiny emblems sitting there. Before he left for the Forbidden Grounds, he had no emblems with him. Now there were three sitting in his inventory.

This was conclusive proof that he really spent three months there without even him noticing. However, how was it possible that so much time had passed and he did not even realise it? Unless...

Simon recalled the words that the second fragment told him... [Don't just stand there in a daze, quickly get out of here. This place isn't something someone of your level should have come in contact with it. Time holds no dominion here, for past, present, and future are all merged in the existence that is the River of Destiny].

[To traverse these waters is to witness the birth of galaxies and the fall of civilisations with but a glance. You might feel like only a few seconds have passed here, but days or even weeks might have already gone by in the outside world. If you stay here any longer, you will be affected by its Mnemonic Pull]...

How could he have forgotten about those words? He was pulled into the River of Destiny and had to manoeuvre his way out. Although it was a very short journey from in and out of there, who knew how long had passed in the outside world?

The Sixth Trial being in a state of standstill, also distorted his sense of time, causing him to completely forget about those words. If it was the Mnemonic Pull of the River of Destiny, no wonder so much time had passed.

It also made sense why Irene's message contained a sense of urgency and why his subordinates were so delighted to see him again. It was because for them, he was gone for over three months after saying that was going there for training for a while. Naturally, they would be worried.

"From your expression, it looks like you weren't even aware of the passage of time. Did something out there?"

As expected of Irene, she was quite sharp and quickly noticed the unusualness in his behaviour. Since Simon thought that his experience might help them, he told them all about the River of Destiny and what happened in the Forbidden Grounds.

Of course, he made sure to tone it down and omitted a few parts so that they wouldn't overly worry for him.

GASP... Annette and the maid sisters covered their mouths as they gasped, their eyes filled with curiosity and wonder for this unknown place. Others sat there marvelling at the adventure their master had gone through.

As for Irene, she was making some strange expression as if she was trying hard to recall something.

"Is something wrong? You look like something's troubling you" Simon asked.

"No, it's nothing, I just felt my head aching for some reason"...

"Are you alright? If you are not feeling well, you should take some rest" Simon held her hand and spoke with concern.

"No really, I am alright. I don't know why I felt a headache, but it's gone now" Irene showed a reassuring smile.

Though he could tell that there was still something bugging her, Simon did not press her. He knew that not having one's memory can be quite strainful for someone. It would only get worse if he pressed her to remember.

Instead, it would be better if she gradually recalled her memories.

"So I was gone for three months huh? Did something happen in the dungeon during that time?"

Simon changed the subject. Three months wasn't a short period of time, it was enough for many changes to occur inside an intermediate dungeon like Laplace. There were bound to be many new adventurer groups popping up and overtaking the old ones.

Simon was curious to know what floor the adventurer had reached during this time. However, when he opened the [Dungeon] option of the Main Menu and glanced at the exploration progress of the adventurers, a frown appeared on his face.

The reason for that was...the highest floor cleared was till 71st floor, there was no progress made even after so long had passed.

The Adventurer's guild who reached the 71st floor was still the only Blades of Ascension and no new group or guild was able to overtake them.

Something was wrong, by now the exploration progress should have reached the 78th floor or higher. Sure, it was true that the difficulty of the floors increased as deeper one delved down and one would need more time to clear it.

However, the difficulty of the lower floors shouldn't pose too much of a challenge for the adventurers that their progress comes to a complete halt. After all, the statistics after dungeon Laplace increased to intermediate rank, showed that the average level of the adventurers and guilds diving inside his dungeon was around level 500.

What's more the statistics even showed an incline trend to the average adventurers level. Given all that, there is no way, a bunch of level 500+ adventurers would be stalled on the 71st floor and below.

Something had to have happened while he was gone. Simon glanced at his subordinates and seeing their unnatural expressions, he knew that he was right.

"Regarding the halted progress of the dungeon exploration, we believe that is due to some kind of organisation or force's intervention. Maya and Jarred are currently investigating it. However since it

poses too much risk to go to the upper floors which are filled with adventurers, it is taking some time"

Irene answered the doubts he was having in his mind.

"When did this start?"...

"A few weeks after you left. We saw exploration progress slowing down and that fewer and fewer adventurers were clearing the floors. At first, we thought that it might be due to some problem that occurred among them and that it might be solved on its own if given enough time. However, things only became worse from that point on and we had no choice but to investigate this matter"

Irene who played as the proxy dungeon master in his absence filled him in on the matter.

"Hmm... you did good by not sending them to the upper floors. We cannot expose the existence of the Forest Spring Spirits living in our dungeon to the outside world"...

Chapter 755 755- [Mana Sense] & [Break]

"That said, from what you told me, I can tell that this matter is not so simple. They might be in danger if they are investigating it alone. Who are with them?"...

"Don't worry master, my familiars are with them. No harm will come to sister Cecilia's clansmen" Theodore answered patting his chest proudly.

"I see, that's good then. With those True Vampires with them, I don't think any adventurers can come close to them. Alright, Cecilia tell Fey and Maya to report to me immediately once they finish investigating".

With that, Simon adjourned the meeting and quickly moved near the Serenity Pond. The subordinates who were left in the hall, saw how much in a hurry he was and couldn't help but discuss.

"Why is Master in such a hurry to train again even though he just came back from his training?"...

"Gasp... it cannot be... is master a training Masochist?".

SMACK... a fist of love came smacking some sense into the peach coloured hair maid.

"What are you talking about? We should all learn from Master's attitude and focus on our own training too" The bespectacled beauty spoke, pushing her glasses up.

"That's right... that's right... I can't wait to show the results of my training to master" the wood elf maid jumped up and down.

Looking at them, Irene made a wry smile. Just like their master, these subordinates of his couldn't sit still either. While Simon was training out there, it was not like they were just sitting idly by.

They were also training their own skills and abilities, mastering and perfecting it. Whether it be the battle maniac Valkyries, the Vampire twins or the [Helpers], all of them diligently trained every day hoping to be of aid to their Master. They never skipped a single day.

Unbeknownst to Simon, his attitude at some point, started affecting his subordinates. Now they had the same outlook towards training and improving themselves just like their master.

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Main Floor, Serenity Pond...

Due to the extreme density of mystical energy present here, not to mention the breathtaking view, the Serenity Pond had long become the exclusive training ground for Simon.

The reason why he was in such a hurry to train again even though he just came back from his training was because he was very close to achieving the next rank.

Demon Marquess... just thinking about it, boiled his blood and he couldn't sit still. He wanted to achieve the rank as soon as possible. He was already at the required level for [Promote] as for the Purifying Crystal Essence, he can just buy the required amount from the shop.

However, the only reason why he wasn't increasing his rank was because he needed to acquire a few more skills. These basic skills are the building blocks for his growth, the proper the foundation, the stronger he would become in the future.

As such, he cannot just skip out on those skills no matter how much temptation the next rank had. Of course, he can acquire the skill after he ranks up to Demon Marquess. However, if he uses the rank up to acquire those skills, he would be missing out on the chance to increase the tier of said skills.

There are two ways of increasing the tier of one skill— The first method is when One's understanding and mastery over the skill reaches a level that is higher than the skill itself. The skill then evolves and reaches the next tier.

The second method is through an evolution of a creature or Rank Up in the case of Demon Nobles. Although less common, it is indeed one of a method. Though very less people in the entire world can achieve it after all, not just anyone can break through the constraints of the bloodline limit and rank up repeatedly.

The way it works is very simple, when a Demon Noble goes through a rank up, a large amount of pure mystical energy rushes into their body to help them refine their bloodline and allowing them to gain all the abilities and skills of that rank.

However, what if someone already acquired those skills before reaching that rank? In that case, the remnant energy that was left after the refinement of the bloodline is absorbed by the skills causing them to increase in tier.

Not many people knew about this method and Simon himself only knew about this method after going through so many rank ups. It was also the reason why Irene repeatedly stressed on him acquiring all the basic skills before a rank up.

It was because Simon was one of the few people in this world who could use the rank up to his advantage to increase the tiers of his skills.

Of course, it was impossible to acquire every skill of that rank, which is why he was only focusing on acquiring the basic skills. These basic skills might not seem impressive; however, it was these small small things that added up later.

Just imagine, having an edge over two or three tiers on all the skills against an enemy. There is no way Simon would find a match against any opponent of the same rank.

He who was already starting to taste the benefits of his training, knew his advantage very well. That is why, he didn't want to give up on acquiring the skills even though he had reached the threshold to rank up.

Simon cleared his mind of all unnecessary thoughts and focused on his training. The trip to the forbidden grounds had allowed him to breach through the wall halting his progress. Now he can give it his all without anything holding him back.

The skills that Simon was trying to acquire was [Mana Sense] and [Break]. The first skill was a mystical ability that allowed one to sense the ebb and flow of the mystical energy in the surroundings more clearly.

Not only that, it also allows one to discern the presence and type of mana within objects and even living beings. For example, using [Mana Sense] he would be able to detect what attributes of magic someone uses even without needing to use his [Appraisal] skill.

Just from the colour and the sensation the other party's mana gave off, he would be able to tell whether they use Fire magic, Earth, Wind or even the Dark magic of darkness aligned beings like him. Nothing could hide from his perception.

Furthermore, Simon could use this ability to detect hidden traps, magical barriers, or concealed objects infused with mana. It was a versatile skill that not only heightened his awareness but also deepened his understanding of the Mystical forces that shaped the world.

A skill that was much needed if he wanted to stand at the pinnacle of this world. If one hones the [Mana Sense] skill to higher tiers, one could even perceive the mysteries of the mystical energy, sense fluctuation in mana, revealing hidden intentions and imminent threats.

The [Break] skill on the other hand was a disruptive force that sends the flow of mana into turbulence causing chaos amidst the ordered symphony of spells and abilities.

When one invokes the skill, it sends a disruptive influence in the mana-laden environment. Using this skill, one could target spells, skills, and magical effects, unravelling their structure and making their magical matrices to go haywire.

For instance, when facing an incoming fireball spell, he could employ Break to disrupt the cohesion of its fiery mana. The once fierce flames might flicker and wane, losing their potency as the spell faltered.

The skill went beyond mere negation. Break allowed one to manipulate the mana to some extent and redirect its flow. This could cause spells to misfire, turning an adversary's powerful incantation into a harmless burst of energy, or could disrupt an opponent's protective barrier, leaving them vulnerable.

In essence [Break] was the weaker version of the skill [Disruption] whose higher version could even interfere with an opponent's weapons and artefacts, rendering its abilities and stats temporarily inert.

Simon had come in contact with the higher version of one of those skill and had a general sense of understanding of how to achieve the other.

He began his training for the [Mana Sense] first. If he could acquire this skill first, then it would be much more easier to learn the other skill. And so, Simon took a deep breath and took out the serenity stone from his inventory.

Soon afterwards, he was enveloped in the effects of the stone and entered a self transient state. In this state, all of his unnecessary thoughts were pushed back and his focus and attention increased manifold.

He felt as if his consciousness discarding his physical shell and expanding beyond the confines of his body, entering a realm of pure mystical energy.

In this transcendent state, Simon spread his senses around like tendrils of consciousness just like how he used to spread his mana using [Mana Flow]. The spread tendrils of his senses started to seek out the subtle vibrations of mystical energy in the surroundings.

At first, it felt like searching for whispers in the wind, but as more and more time passed, his senses grew more acute.

To master Mana Sense, one must develop their six senses and enhance them to new heights. Thanks to the Log training Irene designed for him, not only was he able to hone his instincts and acquire the

skill [Intuition] and [Flash Steps], but it also helped him develop all of his six senses resulting him in acquiring [Enhanced Six Senses].

Chapter 756 756- I Want Everything

Irene had already laid the foundation for him, now all he needed to do was achieve the result.

Using his enhanced senses which were further heightened by the Serenity stone, he attuned himself to the ebb and flow of mana. This was an intuitive understanding of the mystical energy that courses through all things.

Time passed by, as Simon felt his connection with the mana deepen, he could feel the sensitivity of the mystical energy like never before. It manifested as slight tingling, vibrations or even colours in his mind's eye.

He embraced this sensation and let it instinctively guide him. It needs to be mentioned that acquiring [Mana Sense] was not an easy thing. It requires diligent training and unwavering patience.

If there is even a slight chaos in your mind, the entire effort fails.

Who knew how many times Simon failed, but every time that he did, he started all over again. He would practice [Mana Sense] for hours every day after completing his dungeon master duties.

And just like this, three days passed by. On this day, Simon was practising [Mana Sense] just like usual, feeling like he had taken another step towards reaching his goal, when he sensed Emma approaching. He stopped what he was doing and looked at her.

Emma stopped in front of him, bowed her head in respect before reporting.

"M-Master... I-I came to report that... Maya and Jarred are here to meet with you" She reported timidly.

Simon did not mind her fidgety and pensive behaviour, after all, that is how he programmed her.

He nodded his head and followed her back to the White Palace.

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Inside his personal office, Simon sat on his seat and quietly listened to the report.

"Master, I regret to inform you that the condition of adventurers within the dungeon has taken a rather alarming turn for the worse. It appears to be directly correlated with the recent decline in dungeon exploration".

Maya, one of the [Helpers] and his trusted aid, reported with a deep frown etched on her face.

"Go on, tell me everything that you have managed to discover about the mission that I gave you"
Simon asked her to continue.

"Yes, My lord as you asked, I investigated the adventurers to gain more information on the tower town. The erratic behaviour of the adventurers is largely due to the changes that had taken place in Tower Town. The lawless place had become the breeding ground for all kinds of heinous people and criminal syndicates"

"All kinds of factions are fighting openly and secretly to take ownership of the town. Death, blackmail, abduction and extortion, all kinds of atrocities are being committed there. The changes in the environment of the tower town have affected the adventurers, merchants and everyone who came here to seek opportunities inside the dungeon"

"Their attitude seems to say that they have lost interest in the traditional aspects of dungeon delving. Instead, they focus solely on hunting monsters for their carcasses, leaving the dungeon's treasures and mysteries largely unexplored."

Simon narrowed his eyes at this revelation, such a shift in behaviour was deeply concerning. It was evident that the situation in the Tower Town had deteriorated far beyond what he had initially imagined.

It was no longer just a matter of disorganized chaos; criminal syndicates and factions were vying for control, plunging the town into a state of anarchy.

"Hmmm it is as I have thought, I cannot leave the Tower Town on its own or else sooner or later it would become a tumour that would slowly erode away at the dungeon. I will think of some measures to bring the town under control. Anyways, have you observed anything else unusual?"

The one to answer this time was Jarred.

"Indeed, Master. In recent months, I've witnessed a sharp increase in the use of slaves by the adventurers. They are being employed as bait to lure monsters and are treated as disposable commodities. What's even more unsettling is that some of these slaves were once adventurers themselves, individuals who had once delved into the dungeon. Now, they are being used as disposables, forced into servitude."

"Are you suggesting that the inhabitants of the tower town are being forced to turn into slaves?"...

"That's right master. At first, even I found it strange that they would willingly turn themselves into slaves without a fight. However, there seems to be more than what meets the eye. As Maya had said, abduction and blackmailing have become common in the tower town and with the neighbouring kingdom in chaos, all order and laws have ceased working"

"I have heard the adventurers cussing how their relatives and dear ones are being held captive and if they wanted to free them, they needed to fulfil their quotas. The situation has escalated to the point where those who fail to meet their monster carcass quotas are hunted down by criminal organizations and subsequently enslaved. Fear has gripped the town, and many adventurers and merchants have already fled in search of safer territories. Those who remain do so out of sheer necessity, living in constant dread".

Jarred's report made Simon realise that the situation was more dire than he thought. If the tower town was not governed properly, it might destroy itself which in turn would affect his dungeon.

"You two did a good job. Let others take over your duties and rest for a while".

After rewarding his subordinates for a good job, he dismissed them. As he sat on his seat looking out of the window, Simon mulled over the report, thinking over his options.

Should he out and wipe out all these criminal organisations that have taken root in the Tower Town? It shouldn't be too much of a problem to handle the likes of criminal organisations if he or his subordinates made a move.

However, using such a method might be too destructive and could potentially destroy the Tower Town. Besides, they have yet to identify the criminal organisation and if they cannot take them out by root, such incidents would be more frequent.

So what should he do? While he was contemplating his options, an idea struck him.

"As I thought, if I want to solve this problem, that woman would be essential"...

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Training Floor...

The place which once used to be an open space for training, had been expanded both horizontally and vertically in the recent times. Now it held not only the [Prison] area of the dungeon Laplace, but it also had a residential area specifically built for its guests.

The structures of the houses, while not extravagant by any means, exuded a unique and indigenous aesthetic. The houses were known for their sturdiness, reflecting the resilience of their makers, the orcs.

The orcs had carefully constructed these dwellings to withstand the tremors from the training, and their design incorporated elements of nature. The architecture harmonized with the environment, displaying the orcs' deep connection to the earth.

The buildings were crafted from robust materials found in the surrounding wilderness, such as timber and stone, reflecting their practicality and resourcefulness.

Inside one of these houses which served as the residence of the Princess of the Kingdom of Ellesmere, Cynthia and her comrades were currently gathered together to discuss something.

"All these months, he refused to see us or let us out of here. And now all of a sudden, he wants to meet you. I can't help but think it is some kind of plot" the old assassin named Brett spoke in a cautious tone.

"That's right princess, his subordinates always rejected me every time I wanted to meet the master of the dungeon. However, today all of a sudden the subordinate of the dungeon master comes to me with a message that he wants to meet and that too with the princess alone" the burly knight Burg added.

"Maybe it's not a good idea to meet him on your own princess. Let us come with you" the age Marba was of the same mind too.

Cynthia deliberated for a while before turning towards the last person who had yet to speak "What do you think?".

Alvara was silent, she looked at everyone before giving her own thoughts on the matter.

"I have known the dungeon master of this dungeon for a while and although he might not be human like us, he did do us a favour a couple of times. From my perspective, he doesn't seem like a bad person".

"Wait Guard Captain, you are not saying that we should trust a demon, are you? How can you say that after how you saw he kept us like a prisoner here all the time? And if the off chance something happens to the princess, will you be able to take the responsibility?"

The assassin was sceptical. Having gone through a lot in his years, he knew a lot about people and their behaviours.

"Brett don't forget this demon is the one who saved you, the princess and all of us. He even sheltered us even though he had no reason for it whatsoever. And it's not just once that he did that. Are you still asking that after all that he did for us?"

Alvara's rebuttal shut Brett up. It was not only him, even Burg and Marba had nothing to counter against it. They all knew fully well in their hearts that Alvara's words were the truth. The Demon had helped all of them many times. If even after all of this they couldn't trust him then wouldn't that make them out to be ungrateful?

"But sending princess there all alone"...

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"I'm not saying she should go there alone since I will be accompanying her. I am already acquainted with him a couple of times, I believe he will not mind".

"I am grateful for all of your concerns. However, the master of the dungeon especially asked for me to meet him. Bringing someone alone might..."

Cynthia wanted to say that it might displease the master of the dungeon. However, before she could, an unfamiliar presence appeared in front of her door.

"His subordinate is here, it's time I meet with him" Cynthia got up from her seat and walked towards the door. The guard captain who didn't want to leave the side of the princess and her friend alone, followed behind.

"Are you ready? The lord of this dungeon is waiting for you".

Waiting for them outside, was none other than the Weretiger Alric who was assigned to keep a watch on them.

"Wait a minute, before we go to meet with the master of the dungeon, can you ask him if the princess can bring one other person along with her? After all, the princess of a country is about to meet the leader of another faction. It would be seen as less of her if there is no dignitary beside her" Alvara interjected.

Alric made a slightly annoyed face, he was just about to growl and reject her when suddenly he made a strange face. He carefully glanced at Alvara before asking "Are you the one who wants to join her?".

Alvara was taken aback for a second there; nonetheless, she replied with a nod.

Afterwards, the two of them were brought in front of a large circular teleport construct from where they teleported to the [Main Floor].

As soon as Cynthia and Alvara were brought to the [Main Floor], they couldn't help but hold their breath at the sheer magnificence of the place they were in.

The Main Floor of the dungeon was nothing short of a visual masterpiece. Every detail of this ethereal landscape was worthy of admiration. Cynthia and Alvara found themselves immersed in its mesmerizing beauty.

Forget about all the other things here, the air itself here was remarkable. It was dense with mystical energy, unparalleled in its purity. It felt like a tranquil embrace, soothing the soul and calming the mind.

This profound serenity gave rise to a phenomenon: the very air seemed to solidify, forming dense mists and clouds that swirled in gentle, graceful patterns, adding a touch of mystique to the surroundings.

The mountains, distant yet commanding, were a testament to nature's grandeur. Their towering peaks brushed against the pristine white clouds, a striking spectacle that filled their hearts with awe and reverence.

Who would have thought that such natural wonders that were even more striking and beautiful than the dreams they had seen would be present inside a dungeon?

Cynthia and Alvara glanced at each other, both could see the shock and awe in each other's eyes. The [Main Floor] of the dungeon was like an assault on their senses, rendering them completely speechless.

It needs to be mentioned that Cynthia and Alvara both had high statuses. One was a royal, the sole princess of a country, and the other a noble with significant achievements in her name.

Whether it be luxurious things or places, they have seen an opulence of things. Especially Cynthia, since childhood she had seen and visited diverse places. However, none of the places she visited came anywhere close to this place.

Even if she disregarded the beautiful landscape of this place, just the abundance of mana here was ten times; no, twenty times denser than the special place that was built by their founder, the Chamber of Guidance a long time ago. The disparity was such, that it could even be considered an insult.

"Follow me. Make sure you don't stray away from me... Growl" Alric simply growled and continued to lead them around, without bothering about the astonishment the two behind him were feeling after arriving at this place.

Although he maintained a composed exterior, he nonetheless felt quite proud inside. Why would he not? After all, this place was his new home now and the home that his master and the Lord built.

He could still remember how surprised he was the first time he was brought here by his Master Maybell. After that time, his whole outlook on the world changed and his despair turned into hope.

He knew that as long as he continued to serve his new master and home, he would one day be able to get his revenge. It came as no surprise to him that these two foreign people who came from outside the dungeon, would be baffled beyond their minds after witnessing a place of utter magnificence like the [Main Floor].

Cynthia and Alvara followed behind the weretiger. As they made their way further inside, the gentle breeze brushing past their body, carried the delicate fragrance of flowers with it.

A garden straight out of a picture, appeared in front of their eyes. The fragrance in the air was from the thousands of beautiful flowers blooming in their full splendour.

Cynthia and Alvara saw many sights in the dungeon alone in one day that they never thought could have existed anywhere in the world.

After a small tour around the Main Floor, they were finally brought in front of a huge White Palace which was a work of art on its own. The palace itself was an architectural marvel. A perfect blend of grandiosity and elegance that displayed the dungeon master's extraordinary artistic sensibilities.

Every facet of its structure was a canvas for intricate designs and breathtaking details, etched with precision and grace. The palace radiated an indomitable sense of regal dignity and power, its very presence a testament to the dungeon's magnificence.

This was where the master of the dungeon and the lord of this place resided.

"Princess..."...

"Yeah, I know"

Even without Alvara needing to say anything, Cynthia completely understood what she wanted to say.

Wealth, fame, power, territory... the demon had everything. Even the grandeur of the palace he resided in was something that even the royal palace of their kingdom couldn't match.

Who knew a demon they would encounter in the guise of an adventurer in one of their journey, a demon who was chased down by the adventurers out of their kingdom would one day become the master of a place like this?

The two of them couldn't help but be reminded of the times from a few years ago.

"The Lord is waiting for you inside" The Weretiger respectfully opened the entrance and stepped aside.

With measured steps, Cynthia and Alvara entered the palace only to find two maids waiting for them. The appearance of these maids could only be described with the words beautiful.

Not only did they have an impeccable demeanour, their bearing and conduct were simply perfect. It was like they were the textbook definition of what maids were. Compared to them, the maids in their royal palace simply seemed like garbage.

"Greetings Your Highness and Miss Alvara" the maid with long black hair tied into a bun and wearing spectacles, spoke.

As Cynthia and Alvara looked at the maids, they recalled that they were the very same maids that had seen beside the demon before when the other party came to rescue them. That is to say, they were the people closest to the master of this dungeon.

"Please follow me" The maids smiled and brought them to one of the halls.

"Master, we brought them here" the maid with the spectacle announced. A few seconds later a reply came from the other end of the door.

"Come in"

With that, the Valkyries led the two behind them and entered the hall. As soon as Cynthia and Alvara entered the hall, the first thing they noticed was how grand the hall looked.

Draped in riches and sumptuous tapestries, the hall was a testament to opulence. The floor, polished to a reflective sheen, formed patterns and images that seemed to come to life as the light played upon them.

The soft, radiant glow of chandeliers overhead bathed the room in a warm, golden light. In the centre of this magnificent hall stood an immense dining table, its surface a polished expanse of the finest mahogany. It was flanked by ornate, high-backed chairs, each one a work of art in itself, and bearing the mark of master craftsmanship.

Sitting on one of the chairs was a figure with jet black hair and a pair of horns adorning their head. The figure was tall, had a pale white skin and wore clothing that matched their stature.

Their demeanour was arrogant, sitting there laidback with their legs crossed and giving off an immense berserk and oppressive aura.

When Cynthia and Alvara laid their eyes on the figure, they were initially surprised before their expression returned to normal.

[Cynthia be careful, this demon... he has grown stronger again to the point where even I can't see through him] The voice of the Guardian Beast Leo rang inside Cynthia's head the moment they saw him.

The latter cautiously nodded her head and bowed courteously at the other party. She might be a princess with a high status; however, her status stopped meaning anything the moment she ran away from her kingdom.

Besides, she was the one seeking refugee here, so it was only polite for her to greet him first.

"Hehe, no need to stand on ceremony, come and join me. My subordinates prepared a fine meal for this event"

Chapter 758 758- I Want Everything (3)

Simon grinned and pointed at the chairs next to him. The maids led Cynthia and Alvara to their seats and swiftly started performing their duties. All kinds of foods and dishes were brought up the table and their aromas quickly filled the place, stimulating one's appetite.

Foods that they had never seen before and foods that looked simply too tantalising were lined up one after another.

Cynthia and Alvara although very much tempted didn't directly start. Instead, they looked at the demon who changed a lot since the last time they saw him and asked the question they had been holding in for so long.

"The reason why you called us..." Cynthia started; however, before she could continue with her questions, Simon stopped her with a gesture of his hand.

"We can talk about why I called you after a refreshing meal my maids prepared for you two. No need to feel reserved, you can dig in".

Simon broke the ice by starting first. The aroma of the food was already stimulating their nose and appetite, so when they saw Simon starting first, they did not stand on ceremony and dug in.

It needs to be said that all the dishes that were prepared by the maids were all dishes from his previous world. The texture, flavour and even the taste of these foods provided, was completely different and nothing like what they were used to eating back in the capital.

Needless to say, the two women enjoyed the sumptuous meal and the dessert afterwards. Slowly, their tensed nerves relaxed and their minds calmed down a little.

After the meal, the atmosphere inside the hall became casual and Simon finally started the real discussion.

"You should have a vague idea as to why I called you here right?".

"Simon... Ahem Lord Simon is it because you need something from us?" Alvara started by calling out his name but when she felt the glare of the two maids on her, she quickly changed the manner of her address.

Simon felt the change and couldn't help but smile helplessly inwardly. These subordinates of his were just too loyal to him and wouldn't even let slide even the slightest offence. In fact, they were the ones who made him open up the most extravagant hall to entertain the guests saying things like it would be beneath a king to entertain a guest in any other hall.

Simon had to relent to their insistence; however, seeing that their presence here did not help improve the atmosphere, he could only ask them to leave.

With the Valkyries gone, the two girls felt a little more relaxed.

"Now then, coming back to the subject at hand. That's right, the reason why I called you here is because I want something from you. However, before I start explaining my reasoning, I would like to hear your end of the story. I heard from my subordinates that you were trying to reach me for the past three months. Surely, you have something more important to tell me?" Simon looked at the women in front of him and questioned.

Cynthia nodded "That's right, we tried to reach you. However, your subordinate always rejected us saying that you were busy and cannot be disturbed right now".

It was true, when Simon came back from the Forbidden grounds, he was made aware by his subordinates that the guest he gave refuge on the Training Floor, tried to reach him many times during this time apparently.

"My apologies, you see I was outside the dungeon at that time. Anyways, what is it that you wanted to tell me about?"

Cynthia was silent for a while, her expression fluctuated as if she was making a tough decision before she finally opened her mouth and told him about the decision she made.

"I know that it is asking too much after you sheltered and protected us from all of our pursuers and I am truly thankful for it. However, I cannot keep on taking advantage of the hand of gratitude you extended to us. That is why, I ask of you to return us back to the surface world".

"Oh..." Simon had an impassive face on the outside; however, he was internally quite surprised. He didn't expect for Cynthia to come to such a decision especially while knowing that going out would only spell doom for her.

The kingdom of Ellesmere which had lost its king was already in a state of chaos three months ago, now it would be more of a hell hole there. For her to go back there while fully knowing the outcome...

"I see, if you are determined then I won't stop you. However, can you tell me why you want to go out there once again? Is there anything that you can still do to change the situation of your kingdom?"

"It is as you say, there is nothing that I can do to save my kingdom from this madness or from getting pillaged by other countries. However, even then I want to do everything I can. The Kingdom of Ellesmere is the place where I was born, it is the place where I made all kinds of memories, my childhood, my family and my friends"

"Even my father with his last breath told me to save the kingdom. As the sole princess of the kingdom of Ellesmere, I have a duty to protect my country. I cannot betray all those people who still believe in me"...

"Princess... you..."

Cynthia's answer was just like he had expected, she had no plan and was diving towards danger headfirst. While it may have moved the Guard Captain, Simon was simply amused.

"Although It might be impossible to return the favour to you once I go out, I hope that I can return the favour in the next life".

"Hehe...Who has seen the next life? What if I tell you there is a way to return the favour in this life?".

Hearing his words both Cynthia and Alvara looked towards him with surprise.

"What do you mean?".

"Well, what I mean is that I can help you. Let's be honest here, the reason why you sought me out of all people, it's not only to seek shelter from me right?"

Simon had long known that the real reason why Cynthia and her group came to his dungeon. However, since at that time, he saw no benefit in helping them, he only sheltered them inside his dungeon and left them as is.

Now though, the situation had changed and he could see value in helping them.

Having been seen through, Cynthia bit her lips not daring to say anything. She knew very well that she was in no position to ask the other party's help, especially after how her kingdom treated him the last time.

This was also the reason why Cynthia was never able to bring herself to ask for the demon's help all this time.

While she was being reserved, her comrade and friend decided to be open to him "It is as you say, Simon. We came here hoping to seek your aid. The forces of the both first and second princes are too powerful for the princess to compete with."

"If nothing is done, the kingdom would be destroyed and plundered by the foreign countries. It has been more than three months since we last received any updates on the kingdom, the situation must have changed already, we need to hurry".

Her tone was urgent and her eyes looked desperate.

"Calm down, if it's as you say, then even if you all rush out there right now, you won't even be able to make a single wave. If you want my help then tell me more about the situation in the kingdom and the various factions vying for power"

Even though Simon had visited the kingdom of Ellesmere, what he knew about its inner workings, structure and politics was very little. He needed to know more about the geography of the place, the numerous factions that rose to power and their chaotic relationships before deciding on how to proceed.

Alvara realised that he was right and started telling him about everything that needed to be known about the kingdom of Ellsemere, its geography, nobles and the complex factions who were fighting for power both openly and secretly.

It was not only about the kingdom of Ellesmere, she even gave him details about the foreign factions that were intervening from the shadows.

The more she talked about it, the more clear the picture became. Of course, this information was all stately secrets and not something that should be shared especially with a demon noble.

The only reason she told him all that was in hopes that he would help their princess.

Simon nodded his head after hearing the entire thing. He then turned towards Cynthia and asked "Is what she said true, Princess?".

Cynthia moved her head replying that it was correct. Her body trembled ever so slightly as she tried to suppress the complex emotions that threatened to overwhelm her.

"I see" Simon's voice remained impassive. He did not show any compassion or empathy towards the other party even while knowing that her Father the king, was betrayed and poisoned by his very own sons who coveted his throne.

The doctor whom they trusted so much, the doctor their entire kingdom respected so much, turned out to be the perpetrator who poisoned the king in the name of treatment all along and slowly degraded their health and strength. If not for the second prince admitting it in front of Cynthia, nobody would have known about it.

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That was how thorough their plan was. It even reached the innermost circle that the king trusted. No wonder the Kingdom of Ellesmere fell into ruins. Simon could only offer words of consolation; however, he couldn't show any empathy.

"Princess..."

"I'm alright"

After regaining her composure, she gestured towards Alvara that she was fine before placing her gaze towards Simon.

"Master Simon..." This was the very same words of address she used when meeting Simon for the very first time. However, the meaning behind these very same words has changed completely now.

"You told me that you would help me take the kingdom back. However, can I ask you why you are doing so? What motive do you have behind helping us? What do you want in exchange? Surely you don't want me to believe that you are doing all this out of the goodness of your heart right?"

The smile on Simon's lips grew wider, things proceeded really faster when the other party was a clever person. Should he say as expected of the woman who even while being on her own, built the kingdom's biggest merchant guild all on her own?

Well, the more talented she was, it was a good thing for Simon. After all, he wouldn't want an incompetent person to lead his plans.

"My motive huh, before I answer that question, let me put a few things straight first. From what I came to understand from your words, your kingdom is destined for doom. All the major factions are either supporting the first prince or the second prince. As for the third prince, he already left the kingdom to achieve greater martial power"

"As for your own forces, it has either been ceased or forced to bow to the other princes. In a situation like this, it would not be an exaggeration to say that I am your only backing. Without my aid, you would only be meeting a miserable fate if you go back out there. Given all of that, it is clear that I am doing most of the work for a kingdom and its people that are not my own. Don't you think it's a little or to say not fair at all?"

"Now, to answer your question, why am I helping you? What are my motives... the answer is simple, I want everything" Simon declared in a low and distinct manner.

Hearing his words, Cynthia slowly closed her eyes. She did not show much emotion and simply stood there motionless as if she had already expected to hear something like this.

As for Alvara, she looked puzzled for a while, before the meaning meaning behind those words quickly dawned on her. She wanted to argue back; however, even she knew that anything that she could say at this point was meaningless.

Everything that Simon said was true, at this point he was their sole backing and if he did not help them, then they would simply be marching towards their end if they went out now. However, to give him everything, how was it any different than what the second price was trying to do?

"You... Simon... can't you be a little more flexible? Princess has gone through a lot, if you help her at this point, I'm sure she will definitely repay you in the future"...

Simon only spared Alvara a glance, his eyes continued to stare at Cynthia from starting to end.

"My condition will not change. Of course, it is for Her Highness to decide whether she wants my help or not".

What a joke, what he wanted was not a collaboration but complete control. What's more, he held an overwhelmingly superior ground in this negotiation. So why would he willingly discard his advantage and settle for anything less?

At this moment, Cynthia's delicate eyebrows were tightly locked in a frown. Her palms were pressed against each other as she contemplated something intensely. After a while, she opened her eyes and stared straight at the demon.

"Master Simon... your condition... before I accept it, can I ask you about something?"..

"Go ahead"

He shrugged his shoulders. He was not trying to force her into accepting or anything, it depended entirely on her. Just that based on her answer, his decision would change.

"By everything do you mean also mean that the people and the kingdom..."

"That's right, everything that you own, your life, soul, possession will become mine. That also includes the kingdom and the people living in it" Simon answered with a smile.

"Is there any other question you want to ask me?".

He thought that she would ask him a few more questions and try to gauge his intentions. However, to his surprise, she shook her head and immediately accepted his condition.

"Hoh, since you have accepted my condition, I believe you have no problem with it. Then shall we move forward with our plan".

Now that Cynthia was onboard, Simon offered her his complete support. They started making their strategy and how they should move from this point onwards. Needless to say, their meeting took a long time.

During this whole time, Alvara did not say anything, only offering suggestions when needed.

After a while, Simon got up from his seat and started making some complex signs and symbols using his blood as the ink. The symbols formed an eerie looking circle that floated in the air.

"This is?" Cynthia looked at the circle and asked.

"This is the thing that will make sure everything goes as planned, the Soul Contract that binds you to me. Once you form this Soul Contract with me, you will never be able to betray me nor will you be able to break free from my influence. Moreover, your life and death will be under my control from that point on" He explained while pushing the contract towards Cynthia.

"This... how can you..."

No longer able to calm herself down, Alvara finally spoke up. However, before she could say anything further Cynthia agreed to form the contract.

"What do I need to do?"...

"It's simple, just put a droplet of your blood at the centre of the circle and everything's done". Nodding her head, she used her fingernails to cut her palm and let a few droplets of blood drop into the circle.

The next second, the contract glowed an eerie crimson before disappearing. At the same moment, Cynthia felt some kind of connection form deep into her soul, a mark that would forever be branded into her soul.

"You can go back now, my subordinates will come and inform you when everything is ready".

With that, Cynthia and Alvara were escorted back to the Training Floor they were kept in. Once back inside the residential area, Alvara who kept to herself all this while, finally spoke up.

"Princess although I know this was the only choice available to you, but why did you accept his condition? Not to mention that Soul Contract?".

Her voice attracted the other members.

"You two are back? What is going on?"..

"Why did the demon call you? What was the meeting all about?".

Facing their questions Cynthia remained calm as she answered them one by one.

"What you accepted his conditions? Princess, what are you thinking?"...

"Even though he is someone who helped us, he is in the end still a demon. What happens if he decides to kill all the people of the kingdom after he manages to conquer it. What do we do at that time?".

The atmosphere inside the house was dire with everybody making all kinds of grim faces. Although it was a good thing that the princess that they were supporting was getting aid to reclaim her kingdom back. However, this was literally a deal with the demon.

Cynthia looked at her comrades, their reaction was not a surprise for her as she had already expected this. That said, even after making a deal with the demon there was no obvious change in her expression.

She recalled the conversation she had with Leo moments before she accepted the conditions of the demon.

"Leo, will I be able to save my kingdom if I accept the demon's aid?"...

The soul of the guardian beast Leo who was residing inside her ring answered.

"I have no answer for that. However, what I can tell you is that this demon isn't ordinary, Cynthia. I remember the first time I saw him a few years ago, at that time he wasn't even worth noticing. However, now in just a couple years, he has shown growth that is incomprehensible"

"He has grown so fast that it's beyond scary. What's more, it's not only his strength, the things and resources he has piled up inside his dungeon are something that's not inferior to those old Demon Dukes. So to answer your question if he has the means to help you reclaim your kingdom, then— Yes. The level of power he has amassed is more than enough to take back your kingdom"...

"I see... thank you as always Leo"...

"Don't fret about it, I chose to protect you with my title as the Sacred Beast after all"...

If there was anyone she respected and trusted the most, it would be Leo who had guarded her loyally all this time.

As such, she glanced at her subordinates and spoke with conviction.

"My father died because of them and my country was plunged into despair. The capital is flowing with the blood of the innocent every day. At this point, it does not matter if it's a god or a demon I make a deal with".

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"As long as I can take my kingdom back from them, I'm ready to even offer my life to the demon. So everyone, you don't have to worry about me or the demon. As far as my understanding of him goes, he won't do anything that would result in his loss"

"So if I can show him that there is worth keeping the Kingdom of Ellesmere intact, he will not choose to destroy it".

Facing her words and her conviction, the other couldn't say any further. After all, they all knew their situation very well. The person they swore loyalty to was fine with it, so what reason they had to be against it?

They quickly made up their minds to follow Cynthia no matter what path she chose.

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Two days later... Tower Town, West District.

With the increase in the rank of the dungeon, its reputation had also soared. The Tower Town was no longer a small town but had become a small city with a population of over fifty thousand people.

At this point, it has already overtaken the other neighbouring cities like the city of Mountmend, both in terms of population and area.

At this moment near the southern district of the city, around an abandoned building, a man with short brown hair and dark dreary eyes was bound to an iron pillar with chains made with sturdy materials.

The man was Marcel Grice and at this moment he was held as a hostage by the people he had never met or seen in his life.

"Ugh..ghgu. ghghi" Marcel shouted but since his mouth was gagged, he could only utter some gibberish words. His eyes continued to glare at his kidnapper who was hiding their identity underneath a robe.

That being said, from the vague figure that could be seen through the robe, Marcel was clear that his kidnapper was a woman. That creamy porcelain skin that could be seen intermittently from those robes and those dreamy curves, there was no mistaking it.

Given how quickly they knocked him out and brought him here, it could be also be said that they were quite high level. In his profession, it was not a surprising thing for him to get abducted for interrogation.

In fact, he was already prepared for such a future. However, what made him confused was that ever since knocking him out and bringing him here all the way, the other party hadn't spoken a single word.

Even when he tried to incite the other party by making noise and flailing his body around, his kidnapper would do nothing and simply stand there in her place as if she was a doll. He couldn't get any reaction from the woman at all.

What was going on? If the other party did not want to interrogate him, then why did they bring him here?

Marcel looked at the woman hiding her guise with a robe, in front of him. Just as he was starting to guess what the other party's motive might be, a voice came from the back exit of this building.

"Looks like the task was too easy for you. You brought him sooner than I expected"

A feminine voice resounded followed by the sounds of footsteps. A couple of figures appeared in front of Marcel.

The moment he heard that voice he had a vague feeling that he knew this person. However, when he saw who it actually was, he couldn't help but become gobsmacked. With his eyes widened to their limits, and his trembling body, he pointed at the figure leading the group and spoke.

"ghug... ghghu gkguy... ghgugh? gabent gugh.. wiii.. hsh.. ghg..jhih...gwarr..."(You... you how are you still alive? Haven't you died inside the dungeon more than three months ago?)

Marcel questioned. His voice was very rickety given how surprised he was. Why wouldn't he be after all, the person who appeared in front of him was someone who was believed to have died inside the dungeon for quite a while now.

It was like seeing a ghost appear in front of you. Marcel was frightened for a good while.

"You seem like you have seen a ghost? Did my return cause that much of a surprise? That's odd given that you used to be one of my loyal subordinates. However, I cannot see even the slightest trace of happiness on your face."...

"Bugh shnno nbe!!"...

"Hm? I can't understand what you are saying. Miss Bianca can you remove the cloth from his mouth"

At her request, the robe woman who had abducted him, pulled away the cloth gagging his mouth.

Bianca? So that was the name of that woman? Marcel thought. However, he didn't have time to think about that at this moment. As he looked at the violet haired woman, his lips inadvertently moved as he uttered.

"This cannot be? How are you alive? You should have died back inside the dungeon?!!"

That's right, the violet haired woman in front of him was none other than the sole princess of the Kingdom of Ellesmere and the subject of his loyalty, Cynthia.

"You bastard... how dare you betray the princess" Marcel didn't have time to think much before his collar was pulled by another person.

"Alvara?!!"

Even the Guard Captain was alive?!!

"You piece of shit"

BANG... a punch came attacking his face causing him to throw a mouthful of blood. The attacks didn't stop there, after the punch came a kick and then a knee. It was only after the other parties were somewhat content, did they stop attacking him.

"You all..." Marcel recognised all of them. It was not just the Princess and the Guard Captain, there was also Burg, Brett and Marba. The surprise in his eyes was evident after all, all of these were supposed to have died inside the dungeon. Yet here they were all in front of him.

"Dammit... just looking at his face is making me all irritated. Too bad I can't kill him with my own sword"..

"Alvara restrain yourself, we still need him"

On Cynthia's words, the Guard Captain backed away. However, she still kept glaring at him with hatred as if she wouldn't be satisfied until she killed him.

"Miss Annette you don't mind my decision right?" Cynthia turned towards the black haired woman wearing spectacles.

"Lord Simon asked us to aid you in any manner possible. As such, whatever decision you make, we won't interfere" Annette spoke.

At this moment, she wasn't wearing her usual maid gear. Instead, she was wearing a garb that was similar to the adventurers to blend in with them. It was not only her, the other maids including Bianca were in disguise too.

"I see... please thank Lord Simon for me"

Saying that, Cynthia glanced towards Brett, her old retainer who seemingly understood her intentions and stepped forward. The scene that unfolded next wasn't anything surprising, Marcel was tortured and interrogated of all information.

While his screams echoed inside the dilapidated building, on the other side Annette and the others were discussing something of their own.

"Hehe, we finally get to see the outside world. I can feel the excitement rushing through my body" a small boy who looked no more than ten years of age yelled happily while making a fist.

"You don't forget that for this mission Master made me the leader. So you still have to follow my orders"

Annette looked at the overly excited vampire twins and reminded. This was the first time in a while they had been sent outside by their master to accomplish a mission on their own. It was mainly to broaden their horizons and to give them more experience.

What's more, this was also their first time going out without their master and for this reason, the most level headed one amongst them, Annette was made the leader. So everyone had to follow her orders including the twins.

"This is the first independent mission given to us by master and it's a very important one too. As such, we cannot make any slip ups. Let's show him that he didn't make a mistake by leaving it onto us" Annette motivated.

Except for Bea and a few others who willingly stayed behind to serve their master, everyone else present here nodded their heads excitedly.

"Hehe, sister Annette does not need to worry too much, after all you have me the strongest Guardian here" Theodore rubbed his nose and bragged.

"Brother you shouldn't say that"

Maybell from the side tugged his clothes. However, she was too late, the spark was lit. The moment the Valkyries heard that, their eyes blazed with a fire of determination and fighting intent.

Even the most calm and composed Annette had a spark of competitiveness burning in her eyes.

"Hoh, are you saying that you are the strongest while fully knowing the final form of us sisters and how strong Miss Irene who is the First Guardian is? Plus Three of the Twelve will surely disagree with that statement of yours. Especially my elder sister, she won't let that remark slide" Annette stated pushing her glasses up.

"Kuh... sister Mercy huh... we have a bad scompatability. But so what, it's not like I will necessarily lose" Theodore spoke while clenching his hands.

Although he said that he would win, he was visibly shaken at the name of the elder sister of the Valkyries.

"Hehe" Annette smiled, having teased him enough, she changed the topic of their discussion.

After a while, the screams and yells of agony coming from inside the building died down, an indication that the interrogation was finished. Cynthia and the others approached them while wearing all sorts of complex emotions on their faces.