

D. of Pride 921

Chapter 921- Intimate Night (2)

BADUMP... BADUMP... She could hear her heart pounding in her chest, the intensity of the moment was so that it was hard to think clearly.

For a moment, neither of them spoke. The only sounds were the faint rustling of leaves and the gentle hum of magic that always seemed to surround the Tree of Spirit.

The air between them was thick with unspoken feelings, a connection that had been quietly growing for so long.

How long had it been? Finally, unable to take his teasing and boldness any longer, Irene decided to do something that never in her life would she have imagined would fan the fire even further.

She locked eyes with Simon and without avoiding his gaze, she muttered "How long are you planning to continue to tease me? Do you think I'm like those other women who will become meek at your sudden boldness?".

As she said that, her eyes were shimmering with slight moisture in them and her cheeks were blushing red.

At this moment she had forgotten what kind of fatal allure it was for a man when a usually powerful and noble woman who would normally never show a trace of weakness, suddenly display a rare timidity.

Simon's gaze softened as Irene's words hung in the air, the vulnerability she rarely showed making his heart stir. Her flushed cheeks, the slight tremble in her voice, and the shimmering moisture in her eyes—it was all too much for him to resist.

In that moment, he saw past the composed exterior of the Ice Queen and saw the woman who was standing before him, trying to be strong despite the emotions bubbling inside her.

Thus the next moment, without saying a word, Simon gently wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her closer.

The warmth of his touch was both reassuring and electrifying, and before Irene could react, he leaned in and pressed his lips against hers.

The kiss was deep, passionate, and filled with the unspoken feelings that had been building between them for so long.

It wasn't just a kiss; it was an acknowledgement of everything they had been through together, of the trust, the respect, and the undeniable attraction that had always been there.

Irene's eyes widened in surprise, but she didn't pull away. Instead, she found herself melting into the kiss, her hands instinctively reaching up to grasp the front of his shirt.

The world around them seemed to fade away, leaving only the two of them, wrapped up in each other.

There was a tenderness in the way he held her, but also a certain hunger, a need that she could feel mirrored in her own heart.

The world around them seemed to fade away, leaving only the two of them, wrapped up in each other.

"Wait..." As their lips parted, just for a moment, Irene found herself gasping for breath, her heart racing.

"This place is a bit..." She looked up at Simon, her eyes searching his, and saw the same intensity she felt reflected back at her.

"Then shall we take this to our home?" despite the heat of the moment, there was a softness in his gaze.

Simon held Irene in a princess carry and swiftly teleported to the White Palace on the Main floor. The place he teleported to was his bedroom.

At this moment, the entire white palace was empty as all the members gathered in the Forest Spring Village for the night.

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Inside, a dimly lit room with a modest amount of furniture and decoration greeted them. Simon gently laid Irene on the bed. A fiery sensation surged all through his body.

His hands moved and he slowly undressed her. Irene did not stop and simply allowed things to unfold.

Before long, that azure blue dress was removed after which a perfect and flawless naked body was exposed within the bedroom.

During this time, her body trembled slightly with all the embarrassment and lust directed at her. Her eyes held expectation and warmth making her look so beautiful that it could steal one's soul.

"Irene..." Simon muttered in ragged gasps. His hands moved and the couple finally united in a fiery passionate fashion.

Inside the White Palace of the Main Floor, the flower of lust bloomed in its full glory. Lost in passion the pair lost track of time.

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The next day, the soft morning light filtered through the curtains of the place, casting a gentle glow across the room.

Simon lay awake, his arm draped over Irene as they rested under the thin blanket. The events of the previous night played through his mind, the fiery passion they had shared, and the deep connection that had solidified between them.

When he turned his head slightly, the sight of the soul stirring beauty, the Icy fairy who appeared out of reach of the mortals which he desecrated to his heart contents last night, appeared in his sight.

Irene, was still nestled against him. Her delicate shoulder peeked out from under the blanket, the rosy complexion her skin now held was a testament to the intensity of their night together.

She looked serene, in her sleep with dry tears gleaming at the edges of her eyes. Looking at that sight of her, Simon couldn't help but feel a tinge of guilt.

The vulnerability she had shown, the trust she had placed in him, it all showed her love for him.

She had given him her everything yet he who was swept by his lust, was too rough on her. He was like a wold drown by its instinct.

Gently, he leaned in and placed a kiss on her forehead smooth forehead. For a moment, he simply glanced at her, lost in his thoughts and not wanting to disturb this peaceful atmosphere.

However, as fate would have it, he was the master of this dungeon. There were duties to attend to, responsibilities that a Dungeon Master cannot put off.

KNOCK... KNOCK... a timely knock came from the door. Reluctantly, Simon eased himself out of bed, careful not to wake Irene. He dressed himself quietly, pulling on his clothes as he prepared to face the day

Chapter 922- Reaching A Bottleneck In Growth

Just as Simon reached for the door, he glanced back at Irene one last time. She was still nestled under the quilt, her breathing steady and calm. A small smile appeared on his face.

Stepping outside, Simon found Annette waiting for him, as always. Her ever-dutiful presence never changed be it a holiday or not.

"Good morning, Master" she greeted him with a respectful bow.

"Yes good morning" Simon nodded. She and the others arrived the day before yesterday and celebrated the Spiritus Fortuna Festival with all of them.

"Master, I have prepared the bath for you"...

"Yeah, thank you. By the way, where are the others?" he looked around. Other than Annette who was all ready for her duties for the day, the other four maids couldn't be seen.

"Alice is keeping an eye on the prisoners. Bianca is with her. Emma is helping the Forest Spring Spirits and as for Bea, she drank too much last night and is still out of it" Annette reported pressing her forehead in frustration.

"I'm very sorry master. I will discipline her strictly once she wakes out of it" the maid added.

"Never mind, let her rest. She has been a great help to me all this time. She deserves some rest. In fact, tell everyone to take some rest today" Simon ordered in a good mood.

Annette could tell that he was in high spirits and knew the reason why once she took a good look at him. Smiling, she left to carry out her duties.

Back in the room, as the door clicked shut, Irene slowly opened her eyes. She had been awake the whole time and was aware when Simon kissed her forehead but she was just too embarrassed to reveal it.

The memory of his affectionate actions made her heart flutter and the warmth of his presence lingered on her skin. She couldn't help but feel a mixture of contentment and shyness.

"So last night really happened" Pulling the quilt closer, she relished at the quiet moment.

Scenes from last night flashed in her mind, making her quite flustered. Something that the previous her would never imagine was possible.

The Icy queen whose heart was like a millennium old frozen ice had finally been conquered and the man to do that was an upstart demon.

After a few more moments of basking in the afterglow, Irene sat up, allowing the quilt to slide down slightly, revealing more of her rosy skin to the morning light.

The dream that bothered her from the previous day had completely disappeared leaving her all refreshed. She quickly donned on her clothes and headed outside.

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"Level 648 huh, I'm still a long way from reaching the Demon Duke realm" Simon muttered inside the bath.

Ever since the day he made that agreement with Aldebaran his primary focus was on reaching the Demon Duke rank, that is to say, level 700+.

At that time, he was only a low ranking Demon Baron but little by little, he climbed his way and had now become a Demon Marquess a being who was seen as the representative of fear and terror in the world.

If seen from another perspective it would seem inconceivable, a mere Demon Baron rising to such a rank.

However, to Simon, his growth was nothing special. The reason being that— as he climbed higher, the enemy he faced also became stronger and more tougher to beat.

Considering the latest event where he had to face three of the seven kings who were all late stage level 700+ beings.

Had it not been for the many tricks and cards up his sleeves, facing beings of such level would be impossible for him. Especially that Ogre King, even until the end, he managed to surprise him.

Simon didn't want to think what would have been the consequences had the ogre king really managed to grasp the full strength of space and mutation magic.

Even for him right now, these two powers were an unknown territory that he only had little knowledge about. That said, from what little he did know, he was sure that even with his preparations and trump cards, he wouldn't have been the ogre king's match.

Call it a good fortune or fate that the ogre king was still a level away from reaching 800. He might have glimpsed into the next level and gotten some form of epiphany.

However, the powers he utilised in the last battle was far from being mastery. Or else given all his methods he wouldn't have been able to defeat him.

It wasn't just him willingly yielding to a higher power or the knowledge he procured from the [Memories of the World] but his personal intuition.

And he was right, the mastery of Space was a realm that belonged to a higher plane. Someone who had stepped onto this level, could manipulate space and create space locks so powerful that anyone below level 800 could not break through unless one possessed Lost Legendary grade skill or mastered the space themselves.

Only Lost Legendary grade skill or Spatial strength can counter spatial strength. From this one could understand how enormous the gulf between the two levels was.

Even the ogre king who was just a level away from reaching it was nowhere close enough when it came to the strength possessed by someone who had actually stepped into that realm.

"Stronger, I have to get much stronger" Simon clenched his hands steeling his mind.

The enemy he would face in the future would be much stronger so much so that the likes of the Ogre king could not even compare.

It was not the distant enemy he was talking about, but the ones who were lurking behind the shadows and manipulating the scene.

Just recently in the conflict against the Blackthorn Kingdom, a new and powerful enemy who was much stronger than anyone he had faced until now and who was an incredible schemer, was revealed.

They were not only hiding in the shadows, manipulating from behind the scenes, but they were also quite strong.

Chapter 923- Reaching A Bottleneck In Growth (2)

To be able to create one's own skill and pass down a portion of their strength to their subordinates, the enemy had to be incredibly powerful.

Even Simon had a vague idea when it came to the level required to achieve something like that. He was mostly unaware of the realm beyond level 800+.

Be that may, what he had to do didn't change. Since such a powerful enemy was lying in ambush in the shadows for him, he just had to rise up to the challenge and get stronger faster than before.

That's what he had been doing up until now and had to continue to do so. Especially now when the fates of all the people dear to him, depended on him.

"If there is one thing that can quickly allow me to increase my strength, then it is the Celestial Oculars" Simon touched his left eye.

This peculiar eyeball that he got from the Auction of the Damned, fused with him becoming his current left eye. There were many unknowns about this and even he himself had to fully unlock all of its powers yet.

Simon could tell that the power he used during his fight with the three kings, the one that allowed him to swap with objects and things in a certain area, was just one of the abilities of the eye.

There was still much more to explore, much more to discover.

"If I can master all the abilities of the Celestial Ocularis, my strength will increase manifold" It would take a long and gruelling process to increase his skills and stats.

Whereas, the powers of the Celestial Ocularis which relied on comprehension and suitability was the only thing that could increase his strength in a short term.

Even Irene had said that the mastery of the eye would depend on his ability and destiny. However, once he successfully mastered it, he would be able to get immeasurable strength.

The first ability [Swap] had already proven its worth in the fight making Simon wondered what other abilities the eye hid.

"Other than the eye, there are also the new skills that I need to master" he muttered checking his status window.

Name:- Simon

Race:- Demon Marquess

Titles:- Demon of Pride [Incomplete Fragment 2/5],

Level:- 638,

Stats:- HP:- 501,099

MP:- 775,100

Strength:- 7104

Defence:- 7414

Agility:- 8050

Magic:- 8725

Endurance:- 7300

Luck:- 4220

Skills:- Language Mastery, Appraisal, Mental Map, Infernal Magic Mastery, Tempest Magic Mastery, Thunder Magic Mastery, Dark Magic Mastery, Ultra High Speed Thought Processing, Extraordinary Vitality, Supersonic Flight, Herculean Strength, Body Empowerment, Flame Resistance, Gale Resistance, Lightning Resistance, Pain Negation, Blunt Damage Negation, Omnidirectional Awareness, Conceal Presence, Crimson Tyrant Eyes, Herculean Agility, Ultra Enhanced Endurance, Herculean Magic, Herculean Defence, Mana Efficiency, Enhanced Six Senses, Mystic Mana Lines, Ten Thousand Sword Mastery, Burnt Sword Mastery, Demon Marquess' Esteem, Mana infused Hide, Earth Shattering Roar, Rift Walk, Dark Deprivation, Dark Lock, Chilling Touch, Soul Empowerment, Poison Negation, Cut Negation, Piercing Negation, Evil Eye Negation, Night Shackle, Netherclaw, Midnight Judgement, Umbral Words, ??????, ??????, ??????,

Amalgamation Magic:- [Infernal-Tempest Mastery], [Infernal-Thunder Mastery], [Dark-Flame Mastery]

Inherent Skills:- Dungeon Creation, Main Menu, Ancestral Symbol Ignition.

Language Comprehension—> Language Mastery

Gale Magic Mastery—> Tempest Magic Mastery

High-Speed Thought Processing—> Ultra High Speed Thought Processing

Ultra Regeneration—> Extraordinary Vitality

Ultra High-Speed Flight—> Supersonic Flight

Ultra Enhanced Strength—> Herculean Strength

Body Reinforcement—> Body Empowerment

Pain Resistance—> Pain Negation

Blunt Damage Resistance—> Blunt Damage Negation

Sense Presence—> Omnidirection Awareness

Hide Presence—> Conceal Presence

Abstruse Demonic Eyes—> Crimson Tyrant Eyes

Ultra Enhanced Agility—> Herculean Agility

Ultra Enhanced Magic—> Herculean Magic

Ultra Enhanced Defence—> Herculean Defence

Minimal Mana Consumption—> Mana Efficiency

Sharpened Senses—> Enhanced Senses

Superior Mana Lines—> Mystic Mana Lines

Thousand Sword Mastery—> Ten Thousand Sword Mastery

Demon Earl's Intimidation—> Demon Marquess' Esteem

Resilient Mana Hide—> Mana Infused Hide

Piercing Demon Roar—> Earth Shattering Roar

Black Flash—> Rift Step

Poison Resistance—> Poison Negation

Cut Resistance—> Cut Negation

Piercing Resistance—> Piercing Negation

Demonic Eye Resistance—> Evil Eyes Negation...

Looking at his status, Simon was quite pleased. After his rank increased to Demon Marquess, many of his skills evolved, reaching new tiers. Looking at his status no one would say that it was the status of a Demon Marquess.

That's right, thanks to his intense training and diligent ranking up, the tiers of his skills were higher than the status of most Demon Marquessess.

In fact, when it came to pure skill tiers, he could evenly match with Demon Dukes. That was how absurd Simon's growth had been.

Other than his existing skills ranking up, he also has numerous powerful and high tier skills.

These skills which he got after levelling up to become a Demon Marquess were all double edged skills and had to be mastered before he could use it or else he could end up hurting himself.

It was also the reason why Simon abstained from using them in his fight against the three kings. It was because he had yet to understand these skills fully. If he could master these skills fully, his strength would increase even further.

Other than the skills, there was also the case of his magic. Now that he had reached Level 638 and become a Demon Marquess, all of his magic had increased to a whole new level.

The three basic attributes he had compatibility with, had all reached the Advanced tier. What's more, he was now even able to use the Amalgamation magic of two advanced tier attributes.

Though it does take a toll on his body, it was still doable. As for the Rare Dark magic, he could feel his mastery over it increasing. He felt like it would not be long before he could use the intermediate tier of Dark magic.

"These days I have been working on Amalgamation Magic of Intermediate tier Flame and Dark magic. However, it seems it's still too difficult"

The Amalgamation magic of other attributes had reached its limit. Now no matter how much he trained or subjected himself to those inhumane training regimes, the level of his Amalgamation magic wasn't increasing.

Chapter 924- Corrupted Weapons

It was more like hitting a wall and nothing he did worked. Now all he could do was let time run its course and hope that he would gain some sudden enlightenment.

That is the only way to breakthrough to the next stage... i.e. the mutation magic.

Simon knew how difficult it was to master mutation magic which is why, he was focusing on strengthening his other aspects.

The Dark magic which was one of the four rare attributes still had a lot of potential that he could draw out. If he could combine dark magic with another attribute to create a new amalgamation magic, the strength it would possess would by far exceed the amalgamation magic of two intermediate tiers and even some advanced tier magic.

His status window proved the fact that he still had a lot of areas and aspects he could increase to raise his strength.

After finishing his bath, Simon headed out. His destination was the training floor which had been completely remodeled to contain an underground prison and a wide area akin to a city above.

Annette who was dutifully waiting for him, handed him his new set of clothes and together they headed for the training floor.

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"Big sister Bea" Alice who was waiting near the entrance of the prison, tackled Bea in High spirits.

"I feel like it has been so long since I last saw you" the youngest Valkyrie snuggled adorably.

"What are you saying you stupid girl, you were only away for a couple of months and besides, we saw each other yesterday didn't we?" Bea sighed rustling her little sister's hair.

"Unn" Alice pouted "Its true but you went away in the middle of the festival. Are you perhaps upset? Was it one of the prisoners? Dammit those bastards, I will drill hundreds of holes in their bodies".

With a savage expression, she was about to head inside the prison and torture those unfortunate souls when she was stopped by Bea.

"Calm down, it's not that. I went away in the middle yesterday because the festival was just too much for me. I was not feeling well"

Perhaps she could have fooled others with that excuse of hers. However, the Valkyries were programmed to be a tight knit group of sisters who understood each other very well.

As one of them, Alice understood her big sister more than anyone. When it came to occasions like these, she was the heart of the festival, someone who would hype the event with just her presence.

She who loved festivals... for her to go away somewhere in the middle, there had to be some big reason.

She wasn't well? Alice wasn't going to believe that pathetic excuse.

'As I thought something must have happened' the Valkyrie looked at her big sister and noticed the slight patches of red at the corner of her eyes. Although it was barely visible, it wasn't going to go unnoticed from her sharp eyes.

Bea was crying!! But why?

In this world, there was only one person who could make her cry like this. She did not even need to ask who was it.

"Big sister Bea, don't tell me you are still harbouring feelings for Master?" Alice asked.

Bea who didn't expect her little sister to find out her secret was at a loss for words. She was trying to hide her feelings because of the event that happened yesterday.

However, hid as much as she wanted, it still came to the surface in front of Alice.

"Tell me what happened"...

"You little girl, you are thinking too much. I told you nothing happened. It's just that I'm a little stressed these days. As I thought I needed to play with the prisoners more to relieve myself"

Not wanting to explain any further, Bea walked ahead.

Looking at her back profile, Alice who noticed how heartbroken she looked, couldn't help but sigh. Love for their Master was a sentiment they all shared. However, in their case it was more of an adoration and faith than anything else.

It was nothing like how Bea felt. She could understand some of her emotions and what she was going through. Nevertheless, it was at the end their master's choice.

Emotions and feelings for others cannot be forced, one can only nurture it slowly.

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Bea, Alice and the other stood in front of the newly established storage quarters near the training grounds. The storage quarters was a huge building as big as a football stadium and used to temporarily store items and treasures looted from the intruders.

There were tens of thousands of items carefully organised and stored inside the building. In fact, storing and organising these items turned out to be a much bigger task and opened up the position of a treasure keeper.

As the dungeon grows stronger and faces more enemies in the future, the position will surely attract more attention. For now, the orcs were ordered to handle the storing and organising of the items.

ZAP~ Space twisted and with a beam of light that fell from the ceiling and together with it, the master of the dungeon and his maid appeared in front of everyone.

"Hm? It looks like everyone is gathered here. I hope I did not make you wait for long?" Simon spoke with high spirits.

He looked at the Valkyries standing in front before shifting his eyes towards the orcs.

The one in charge of guarding this place was Berisol. An orc who had evolved into the Rimeblood Tribe and was one of the beings he used to test the powers of the newly evolved orcs back when he went to the previous harpy's territory to fight the subordinates of the Ogre King and Ivory Teraquake Rhino.

After that occasion he understood the strength of this orc very well and decided to have him guard the storage quarters for the time being.

Noticing Simon's gaze on them, all the orcs fell on their knees, their eyes reverent and feverish. It was as if they were looking not at their master but a god.

Chapter 925- Corrupted Weapons (2)

It was not just Berisol, the intensity could be seen shared by all the orcs even the lowest ranking one. That was how high a position Simon held in their hearts.

And why would he not, revenge against the ogres after their previous humiliating defeat in the forest was one of their lifelong dreams and ambition.

Now that it has been fulfilled, the orcs seemed to have grown even more fond and reverend of Simon. Had it not been for him, their whole clan would have been exterminated that day or forced to live a humiliating life under the subjugation of the ogres.

For them, he was not only their saviour, but also their avenger.

"Raise your heads" On Simon's order, the orcs picked themselves up.

"I hope you all have been doing well"...

"It's all thanks to lord Simon. Without you we would have never experienced such glory" Berisol thanked bowing his head deeply.

"Enough, I did what I had to. Besides, I am not being partial here. The black ogre clan has much potential. As such, I am planning to have them serve under me in the future".

It was as Simon said, although he helped the orcs to take revenge on the black ogre clan, he was only using a borrowed knife to cull their numbers.

From the beginning, he had no intention of favouring one clan. He wanted to bring all the various clans inside the forest under his rule. And to do that, he started with the Orc clan.

"Even then, we are eternally grateful" Berisol spoke.

For them avenging their honor was more important than exterminating the black ogre clan.

"It's good if you understand that. In the future, many more clans other than the black ogre clan would be joining us. It would be better for you all to get along together"

After giving his instructions, Simon placed his eyes on the entrance of the storage quarters. His main motive for coming here was to check on the items that were brought here the day before yesterday.

The items that wreaked havoc in the kingdom, the source of the unusual energy that the soldiers of the Kingdom of Blackthorn were using.

They were brought here to be stored with the other items when Annette and her team returned to the dungeon.

"Let's go inside. I have been wanting to see those items for myself" Simon spoke and took the lead to head inside.

Ever since receiving the report from Annette about these items which were detailed some kind of unusual energy that was very similar to his own item, he had been curious about it.

The report was given about a month ago, today finally he could see those items with his own eyes.

As he stepped inside, a massive ceiling and an enormous chamber greeted him. The air here was cool with a quiet hum of ambient magic that vibrated through the space. Thanks to the numerous items and treasures stored here, the entire place bore a mystical ambience to it.

Rows upon rows of shelves, containers, filled the expanse. Weapons of all kinds—ancient swords, cursed daggers, and enchanted bows—lined one wall, each radiating a unique aura.

Opposite them were artifacts and relics, glowing with faint, otherworldly light. Every item or treasure here was distinctly separated, with magical barriers ensuring that no two items interfered with each other, maintaining the strict order of the storage.

As he looked around the storage quarters, Simon couldn't help but ask "Where are the items from the recent acquisition?".

All the items here were either acquired from the intruders or procured from Prime's workshop. He couldn't see the items Annette spoke of.

"About that..." The one to speak was the treasure keeper Berisol "The area housing the recent acquisition is a little far down the chamber and separated from the rest".

When Simon arrived at the place he soon understood why it was so. Cordoned off with multiple layers of magical seals and formations, the items were completely blocked from the outside.

Unlike the other items that were neatly placed on shelves or within containers, these objects were held within a large, reinforced containment field. It was done so as to prevent their malevolent energies from leaking out.

"So these are the items huh" His crimson eyes landed on the many armors and weapons placed inside the seal as he carefully studied them. Even with just a glance anyone could tell that the items here were unusual, they had that kind of presence about them.

"Hmm, this energy... though it's different it does bore some resemblance"

There was a slight thrum of strange energy that felt disturbingly similar to the energy he was familiar with.

Simon moved closer to one of the pedestals and commanded "Lower the containment on this one, I need to examine it up close."

At his words, Annette hurriedly cautioned "Master please be careful. These weapons, they have the ability to corrupt one's mind".

Simon nodded and headed in. Even without Annette's caution, he knew not to underestimate this unknown energy and besides, if it was what he thought it was, he did not need to fear it.

On his command, the warden Berisol pulled the lever and a small gap appeared in one of the seals. Using this slight gap, Simon stepped inside.

At that moment, all that energy that was contained and sealed off within this formation, came rushing at him like a wave trying to capsize a boat.

"?" His hands moved and Simon prepared an item to defend himself when he stopped in his tracks.

The wave appeared and swept him over.

"Master!!!" Seeing his actions, Annette and the others immediately tried to rush in but were stopped by the gesture of their master who told them not to come in.

Simon turned his attention back on the items placed inside the containment. The level of energy here was enough to cause some low level beings to collapse instantly or corrode their mind.

Chapter 926- Corrupted Weapons (3)

Even higher level beings could feel some level of mental interference from the energy here. It was no wonder why Annette was so cautious.

She had seen the battlefield where all the enemy soldiers and officers were equipped with these weapons.

The level of energy there would have been incomparable to the ones currently contained inside the seals. She must have seen many people go berserk or break down mentally whether it be enemy or ally.

It was because of this reason that she was so worried. However, she had forgotten he possessed a source that produced this energy which was multiple times more pure and dense.

That's right, as he had suspected, the energy given off by these items although extremely diluted, possessed the essence of curse energy.

Simon fixed his gaze on a particularly innocuous-looking sword. The sword handle was small and the blade chipped and worn, but the power emanating from it was anything but weak.

He could sense the malevolence within it, coiled and waiting like a serpent ready to strike.

"Interesting... these attributes are similar to the finger of Ozymandias" Simon muttered to himself, lowering his hand.

The sword was definitely reacting to him, and instantly mellowed out whenever he touched. It was as if it was a beast that had been tamed by him or maybe was cowered by the power within him.

This kind of reaction was something he got when coming in contact with the Curse energy for the first time. Back when he was clearing the fourth trial in the forbidden grounds.

His first encounter with the curse energy was when he fought with those zombies. It was only later on during the trial that he found out that the source of this unknown energy which was making these zombies was the curse energy.

The finger of Ozymandias that appeared afterwards and him being immune to it for some odd reason.

Simon always wondered why was he able to come in contact with the curse energy and even use it without suffering any of those drawbacks that others did.

He had seen with his own eyes during the trial what fate awaited those who were exposed to the curse energy.

Yet despite all that when it was his turn to face it head on, the energy turned docile like a tamed beast on a collar. It was a mystery through and through as to why it was so.

Nevertheless, thanks to that, he was able to come out on top and subdue the Finger of Ozymandias who was the final boss of the fifth trial.

Anyways, now that he knew it was curse energy, Simon could feel a connection forming, a thin, almost imperceptible thread of energy linking the dagger to him.

Others, unless they were the soldiers of Blackthorn, would be repelled or consumed by the power, but he could control it and even bend it to his will.

"Master, are you alright? Did you find anything?" Seeing that he had yet to drop the sword and appeared normal, Annette couldn't help but ask.

SIGH... He let out a deep breath still staring at the sword in his hand.

The room was silent except for the faint hum of the containment seals, the oppressive energy contained once more. Annette's question hung in the air, but Simon took a moment before answering, carefully placing the sword in its place.

"Yes, I did find something, but instead of providing answers, it only made things more mysterious. However, there's one thing I'm sure of now—the energy you guys have sensed from these items is definitely the same as the one item I possess."

The Valkyries who participated in that war exchanged surprised glances. They had all felt a vague sense of familiarity when they first encountered this peculiar energy, but none of them had expected it to be so closely tied to the power their master wielded.

The realization brought a mix of unease and curiosity. Why was it the same as the energy their master used?

What was this energy and why does the enemy possess it?

"So, these items..." Annette started, her beautiful eyes behind the glasses narrowed as she thought of a possibility "If they have the same kind of energy, does that mean that master knows the enemy..."

Before Annette could speak her thoughts, Simon shook his head "Let's stop here. Whatever we could think at this point would only serve to confuse us even more"

"As I said before, these items today have raised more questions than answers. That said, what I can do say for sure is that there is nothing for anyone to worry about. No matter what kind of enemy is waiting for us, our dungeon will overcome them all".

His final words that spoke of victory and his tone that held no doubts, cleared the dreary and malignant air in the room as if it was never there.

Everyone cheered and felt their confidence soaring.

"Master is right, there is no point in thinking too much. Now that we know it is the same energy as what the master uses, we can be better prepared for it next time" Annette spoke on behalf of everyone.

"By the way master, what should we do about these items?"

Simon's gaze shifted to the many items sealed within the containment area. "These swords and armors themselves aren't the true source of power. They're nothing more than afterproducts, byproducts created by infusing curse energy into them"

"It's like they were mere vessels, or tools, corrupted by the dark energy of whoever—or whatever—produced them"

In short, what he was trying to say was that these items held no value. Other than the soldiers of the kingdom, no one can use it and since it has been contaminated with curse energy the items cannot be used as raw material either.

That said, he couldn't just throw it out as he was worried about the contamination. The curse energy was like a plague that was incompatible with the mystical energy.

Chapter 927- Plans for building a Dungeon City

If Simon allowed these weapons which had been turned into cursed relics to roam freely, it would no doubt cause chaos in the world. They were better off being contained, kept away from anyone who might get tempted to use them.

"These items, they are unusable. The curse energy that taints them has rendered them unstable. Trying to wield them would be dangerous for anyone. They could easily turn on their wielder, corrupting or even killing them. We'll need to keep them sealed away"

Simon concluded, his voice firm "They're too dangerous to leave unguarded, and until we understand more about the source of this curse energy, we can't risk exposing them to anyone."

The Valkyries and the orcs nodded in understanding. Since their lord was telling them it was dangerous, these items must not surface in the world.

Annette bowed slightly and said "We'll ensure they remain secure, Master. No one will come near them without your permission."

Simon nodded and turned to leave the storage. Now that things were settled here, he turned to head towards the residential quarters which was also located on this floor.

Although he said residential quarters, no inhabitants of the dungeon resided there. The residential quarters were mainly made to entertain guests. Previously, it was used by Cynthia and her entourage.

With Simon taking the lead and the Valkyries following a step after him, they headed for the residential quarters.

"By the way master, Bea has something to tell you" On their way, Alice suddenly commented. The cheeky girl blinked towards Bea who was equally surprised.

"Hm? Is that so? What is it that you wanted to tell me, Bea?"...

"Eh? Ah, that..." When Simon turned towards her, for some unknown reason she couldn't look at him. Her eyes darted everywhere and she behaved much like her sister Emma.

"I-It's nothing..." in the end, she could only say that.

"Hmm... if you say so" Simon shifted his gaze back and continued walking.

Staring at his back profile, Bea recalled the events of last night. Last night, after getting too drunk, she headed out for a late night stroll and coincidentally came to the Tree of Spirits.

That was when she noticed Simon and Irene standing underneath the tree talking about something. In usual case, she would have approached them and joined in their conversation. However, the mood between them was much too intimate for her to intervene.

As she watched them from the distance, the two who seemed to be flirting around, after a while teleported away from the floor.

Bea didn't need to follow them to know what happened next. Simon was the master of the dungeon, an extraordinary demon with many powerful beings under him.

While Irene was a woman of ethereal beauty, grace and strength. Her origins although mysterious, were noble and high born.

No matter how you see it, the two were perfect for each other. What's more, they have been steadily building and strengthening their relationship through all the trials.

It was already a known fact that the two loved each other and it was only a matter of time before they tied the knot. It was something that was bound to happen and Bea knew this fact.

She had convinced herself to stay at her master's side without asking for anything else. She thought that she had prepared herself to not receive his love in return... but then why?

Why was it that when she saw the two of them hold each other underneath the tree of spirits, she felt her heart being crushed?

Seeing her anguish and the turmoil in her heart, Annette couldn't help but sigh. She understood the feelings of her sister very well and knew what she was going through.

That said, she could only sigh at the situation and pray that she would get over it soon.

It didn't take long for Simon and the others to arrive at the residential quarters where Cynthia and her entourage were waiting for him.

"Lord Simon, you are here" The former gave a slight bow.

Behind her were Alvara and the others, the same group who had been in the dungeon before. Compared to a couple of months ago they looked more sharp and gave off a strong aura than before.

The war with the kingdom of Blackthorn not only increased their level, but it also forged their minds and allowed them to break out of their shell.

The one who showed the most exemplary growth, Cynthia looked far different than before. It wasn't a mere change in her physical appearance, although she did seem more poised and regal than before.

It was something deeper—a shift in her demeanour, a newfound resolve that radiated from her. She no longer carried the aura of someone still coming to grips with her responsibilities.

Instead, she exuded the presence of a queen who had accepted the weight of her crown and was prepared to make the hard decisions necessary for her kingdom's survival and prosperity.

The others, too, had grown. Alvara and the rest of Cynthia's entourage had shed the remnants of their past selves. They stood straighter, their eyes sharp and alert, their auras reflecting the battles they had fought and the challenges they had overcome.

The war and the numerous trials had tested them, forced them to grow beyond what they once were.

"Welcome," Simon said, nodding to Cynthia and her group who looked nothing like the people who had entered the dungeon months ago after being pushed into a desperate situation.

After giving their usual greeting, they headed inside the residential quarters. Although it was ordered by Simon and made by the orcs as an experiment to see their labour force and capability, the residential quarters were built far better than he imagined.

The houses were spacious, with high ceilings and intricately carved wooden beams that added warmth to the atmosphere. The large windows allowed people a clear view of the training grounds. The furniture was comfortable and elegant, designed for utility.

Chapter 928- Plans for building a Dungeon City (2)

As for the roads, they were built methodically with cobblestones and reinforced bricks.

Once they were all seated, Cynthia took a deep breath. Her eyes met Simon's, and she carefully considered all of her words and weighed in all the factors.

After a brief moment, all hesitation disappeared from her eyes and she spoke making her decision.

"Lord Simon, after much discussion and deliberation with my advisors and people close to me, I have come to a resolution that I believe will benefit both the dungeon and the Kingdom of Ellesmere. Given the current state of the kingdom, and the unique resources the dungeon offers, I have decided to make Ellesmere a dungeon-exploring kingdom"....

"Hoh? Go on" Simon raised an eyebrow, intrigued by the concept.

There was no surprise in his face even though the news came like a bombshell for others behind him. He motioned for her to continue.

"This decision is not just a strategy for survival," Cynthia explained, "It's a way to ensure the future prosperity and strength of the people's kingdom. By focusing on dungeon exploration, we can tap into the abundant resources within these floors—resources that we can use to sustain the kingdom without having to depend on trade with other nations"

"The people will no longer be at the mercy of external forces or the fluctuating politics of the Central Continent."

"And that is not all" she continued "The dungeon is a place that challenges and pushes individuals to their limits. By regularly exploring the dungeon, the soldiers and adventurers of the kingdom will grow stronger, their levels will increase, and they will gain valuable experience"

"In time, we may even see the rise of rankers among our ranks—individuals who can stand toe-to-toe with the strongest in the world. This will not only bolster the kingdom's defences but also give us a significant edge in any future conflicts."

From the explanation, everybody could tell that she had given quite some thought and deliberation about it. Not only that but she had also figured out most of the details for the plan causing Annette and the others to look at her in a new light.

"I believe that this is the best path forward for Ellesmere. It's a way for us to secure the kingdom's independence, to build a foundation of strength that will last for generations".

Simon listened carefully with a half amused half intrested expression. Cynthia's proposal was bold, but it was also logical.

The dungeon had always been a place of both danger and opportunity, and her plan to harness its potential for the benefit of her kingdom was a calculated risk that could pay off immensely.

"You've thought this through," Simon spoke, his eyes staring straight at Cynthia "Making your kingdom a dungeon-exploring nation is not a decision to be taken lightly, I hope you've clearly weighed the pros and cons?"

Cynthia nodded. "I have. I understand the risks, but I also see the potential. If we are to survive and thrive in this world, we need to adapt. We cannot obstinately stick with the old rules and customs. The old ones die and the new carry on. The dungeon offers us the means to survive."

"Hehe, indeed it is as you say. I can now see what you are trying to achieve" Simon leaned back in his chair, a small smile playing on his lips.

"The dungeon is indeed a place that can fulfil one's wishes, It is filled with riches and opportunities that you people need. However, princess aren't the statements you made before all benefit your people and the kingdom?"

"What is there for the dungeon to benefit by opening its door for the people of the kingdom?"

Cynthia continued meeting Simon's gaze without breaking away. She had anticipated this question, knowing full well that the demon was not someone who would allow others to take advantage of his domain without gaining something in return.

She leaned forward, her hands resting lightly on the table as she spoke "Lord Simon, I expected you to raise that question. You can rest assured, the dungeon's interests are very much aligned with the kingdom, and I believe there is mutual benefit to be found in this arrangement"...

"Oh? How so?"...

"By allowing the people of the kingdom to enter the dungeon and explore its depths, you will be fostering a new generation of warriors, mages, and leaders who are bound to the dungeon not just by necessity, but by choice"

"They will grow stronger, and in turn, so will your dungeon. Their experiences, their power, their very lives will become a part of the dungeon's legacy."

"Furthermore," Cynthia continued, "the treasures and resources gathered from within the dungeon will not simply vanish into the kingdom. A significant portion will be offered back to the dungeon, a tribute of sorts"

"These resources can be used to further enhance the dungeon, to strengthen its defences, or to cultivate new, more powerful creatures within its depths."

Simon leaned back, intrigued by the direction she was talking about. More so than the treasures and experience of the warriors and adventurers, what he was interested in was the dungeon points.

With the arrival of people, it would bring a fresh new flow of dungeon points to his dungeon. The scale of which couldn't be compared to the points he was earning right now.

If he thought about it carefully, it wasn't a bad trade for him either. The more the warriors and adventurers of the kingdom grow, the more the points they would offer him.

Cynthia did not know about this fact but as the mistress of the Serene Palace merchant guild, she was a professional businesswoman and expert negotiator. She quickly identified what Simon was interested in and took the reins.

"Dungeon city... I'm sure that would be possible to build too"

For the first time since the negotiation started, Simon looked surprised. Up until now, he had predicted everything that Cynthia would say or use as a bargaining chip. However, what he didn't expect was for her to say those last words.

Chapter 929- Plans for building a Dungeon City (3).

What did it mean to build a Dungeon City? No even before that, how did she know about this plan of his?

The plan to build a dungeon city which was closely related to the hidden condition of [S] tier dungeon, was something he did not even tell his subordinates much less the princess who had only recently become a part of his dungeon.

How...

"How was I able to find out?" Cynthia spoke out as if reading his thoughts.

"I wasn't sure before but now with that reaction of yours, I'm sure. You are planning on building a city inside your dungeon."

Now in complete control of the negotiation, she explained "The term 'Dungeon city' might be foreign or new for the people around these lands. However, in the Mainland of the Central Continent, it is not that rare"

"In fact, there are a few dungeon city in existence and each and every one of them are quite famous. Since you helped me out and even saved the Kingdom, I thought you might be planning to build a dungeon city one day".

Simon sighed, honestly impressed by the woman's insight. Calculative and meticulous, it was no wonder she was able to build her own merchant guild and survive in the cruel politics of her kingdom.

Perhaps it was a mistake in the first place to engage her in a negotiation battle. Simon leaned back in his chair with an expression curiosity and contemplation.

Cynthia's insight had caught him off guard, but in a way that he found oddly refreshing. It wasn't often that someone could match his own thought process, yet here she was, peeling away layers of his plans with remarkable ease.

"You're right," He admitted with a faint smile. Now that it was out, there was no point in hiding it.

"Building a dungeon city has been a long-term goal of mine. But it's not something that can be accomplished easily. There are many challenges and targets that needs to be achieved".

A dungeon city isn't just about constructing buildings or attracting people. It's about creating a sustainable ecosystem within a dungeon, a place where life can thrive despite the inherent dangers of such an environment. A habitat that would attract humans to stay.

The planning and logistics alone was staggering. First and foremost, there was the issue of stability.

A dungeon is an entity that is constantly shifting and evolving. To build a city within it, one needs to make sure that the dungeon's natural fluctuations wouldn't pose a threat to its inhabitants. Only a place with a stable foundation could anchor a city.

And that was just the beginning, there's also the matter of resources. A city, especially one within a dungeon, would require a constant influx of supplies—food, water, materials and such.

You would need to secure a reliable source for all these essentials, either from within the dungeon itself or through trade with the outside world.

There was also the question of defence. A dungeon city would be a prime target for adventurers, mercenaries, warriors and other roughnecks.

It would need a robust defence system and administration to protect the city from both internal and external threats. There were many things to be considered before the dungeon city could be built.

In this meeting, Simon and Cynthia spent hours going over the finer details of their plans, weighing the challenges and opportunities ahead of them.

The former wanted to build a dungeon city and the latter wanted to convert her kingdom into a dungeon exploring one and use its resources to build a strong kingdom from scratch.

Both goals aligned with each other and one must be met in order to obtain the other.

"For this to work the capital needs to... " Simon began; however, Cynthia had already prepared her answer.

"Lord Simon does not need to say it. Of course, I am prepared to shift the capital. I have already discussed this in the royal court so there should be no problem"...

"I see, so where are you planning to build your new capital?"

The previous capital was razed to the ground after it fell to the kingdom of Blackthorn. As such, it needs to be rebuilt from the ground once again. That said, the princess said that she would shift the capital instead of rebuild it.

"It is one of the reason why I asked to meet with you. Lord Simon, with your permission I want to build the capital right here at the tower town".

"!!!"

Annette, Bea and everyone there present in the room, were all surprised. Cynthia's entourage were no exception.

Although Alvara and the others knew about Cynthia's plans to shift the capital, they had no idea where it would be moved. It was only now that they heard the location of the new capital.

What's more, the location she chose was right above the dungeon. A place that could be said to be the most dangerous out of any places.

Something like that...

"Your Majesty..." Bret the old assassin tried to speak, wanting her to reconsider her decision. However, he was stopped by the gesture of her hand.

"I know what I am doing. This was a decision I came up after much deliberation" Cynthia spoke, her eyes then shifted towards the demon who was now curiously arching forward from his chair.

"I believe I have your permission right?"

Simon couldn't help but grin. This girl, she was acting even though she knew perfectly well what he wanted.

"You are the custodian of the dungeon so of course I need to respect your decision. Since you have chosen the tower town as your next capital, so be it. I hope that you will work hard to achieve our desired goals"

With that, the decision was finalised. Cynthia and the others remained in the residential quarters for a few more days.

During that time, Annette and the other maids were tasked to take care of them. Since they were already involved with the politics of the kingdom and had a built a good relationship with Cynthia and the other humans, he felt secured leaving this task to them.

Chapter 930- Giant Crystal

Back inside the Main Floor, Simon took a deep dive inside the Pond of Serenity. Just like every other aspect of the dungeon, the Pond of Serenity had also shown growth far greater than before.

Now not only did it occupy a large portion of the land of the Main Floor about 3% but it was now very deep and concentrated. What's more, the ones listed are just the physical change.

The pond of serenity's value didn't come from its highly pure mystical water or its large size but due to the extreme numbers of Heart Veins that ran underneath it.

Heart Veins are higher grades of Mystical Veins that run across the planet and deposit the energy that nurtures all life. After dungeon Laplace rose to [B] tier, the numerous mystical veins running through the Main floor and especially the Pond of Serenity evolved to become Heart Veins.

This in return caused the concentration level of Mystical energy inside the pool to increase manifold thus nurturing and giving birth to numerous treasures.

Simon observed with his eyes, inside one of the fissures obscured by the formation of numerous bubbles, was something that looked like vines.

The reason why he couldn't be sure was because these vines had a unique glow to them and were appearing and disappearing from his sight constantly.

Simon reached out and gently tugged on those vines. Now that he reached level 638 and became a Demon Marquess, his skin and body had become much more resilient to the natural Mystical energy.

He could now dive and stay inside the pond for more than half an hour before needing to surface back.

When Simon tugged at the vines, he felt a sensation as if he was grabbing something that had no substance. Like a mist or an illusion, his hand passed through the object whenever he tried to grab it.

That said there was also a clear sensation that he touched something.

"[Mana Armament]" After thinking for a short while, an idea occurred in his head and he formed a gauntlet of sort made of mana in his hand.

At that moment when he tried to grab the vine again, he could easily hold it.

"I see" Simon nodded, as it turned out you can only grab these mystical items by infusing your limbs with mana. If he didn't know [Mana Armament], it would be hard for him to even touch it.

In any case, after grabbing the vine, Simon surfaced back up.

SPLASH... he sat at one of the stones and looked at the item that was in his hand. Long and winding, the thing in his hand was definitely a vine.

[Whispering Vine of Ensnarement]

Item Type: Mystical Material (Whip-Crafting)

Description: A long, twisting vine that seems to pulse with a faint, eerie glow. The vine is incredibly resilient and flexible, making it an ideal material for crafting into a whip. When held, it emits a soft hum, as though whispering unintelligible words to its wielder.

Abilities: When crafted into a weapon, this vine produces a whip with unique, insidious properties. Striking a target with the whip causes subtle, long-lasting effects on the target's mind and emotions.

The more the target is struck, the more they begin to grow fond of the wielder, as the vine's energy seeps into their mana pathways, altering their perception. Over time, the whip's influence can cause the target to develop an unnerving sense of loyalty and even affection toward the wielder.

Crafting Requirement: Requires the wielder to have proficient control of mana. The vine can only be wielded effectively when the user channels their own mana through it using techniques such as [Mana Armament].

When Simon activated his [Appraisal], all sorts of information flowed inside his head and for a second he was stunned. With the increase in his level, the [Appraisal] skill also started displaying more and more information.

However, the reason why he was shocked was not because of the [Appraisal] skill but because of the vine.

Item Type: Mystical Material (Whip Crafting)... This was the first time a crafting material was produced by the Pond of Serenity.

Before this, all the items he had gotten hold of from the pond were all finished products by themselves. However, with the growth of the pond, materials such as this vine that can be used to produce whips are also starting to surface from within it.

That said... "This whip sure is quite insidious"

To be able to cultivate a sense of loyalty while altering their perception of the wielder through repeated lashing... if this wasn't devious, then what was?

Simon kept the item inside his space ring. He would visit Prime later and ask him to craft it into a whip.

"This came at the right time. Bea was telling me how some of the ogres are still being obstinate and refusing to bow their heads. With this whip, this problem is as good as resolved. I want to see how long that Ogre King can hold on" Simon flashed a devious grin.

After that, he took a couple more dive inside the pond and discovered new items each item.

"This is..." he shifted his attention to the item he just got from the pond. It was a strange stone with rough edges. It was muddy brown in colour with crimson veins that seemed to glow with an inner light.

Despite its unassuming appearance, Simon could sense the immense potential locked within it.

[Appraisal] displayed-

[Giant Crystal]

Item Type: Consumable Artifact

Description: A rare stone that, when consumed, has the power to alter the physiology of its user, pushing them beyond the limits of their race's natural abilities.

Abilities: Upon consumption, the stone forces the user into a brutal evolution, granting them immense physical power, heightened aggression, and the potential to become a variant of their species.

It amplifies the natural abilities of the user, making them grow larger and more fearsome than their average counterparts. The user's musculature thickens, their skin hardens, and their strength multiplies exponentially.