

S vs Rebirth 111

Chapter 111 Realization

While holding his shoulder, the farmer was the first one to move, enduring all that pain. He couldn't help but remember what Noel had done so far, so all he wanted was to make sure that he didn't bring more weight on his shoulder.

Seeing the farmer, the guy behind him immediately followed.

Luckily, the two managed to escape from the dam safely and Noel stood in front of the woods, making sure that the beaver didn't chase after him.

As expected, the beaver demon was angry that its friend died in Noel's hand. It rushed in anger, pouncing on Noel.

Noel glanced at the two guys to check their conditions. It seemed that they managed to escape, so he didn't need to hold back anymore.

The Spiritual Energy covered his sword, enhancing its sharpness and power.

The beaver also raised its claws and rapidly attacked Noel. The latter also did the same with his sword.

Clang!

Clang!

Clang!

In just three seconds, they traded ten blows with none of them planning to back down.

Noel didn't want to use too much of his Spirit Abilities for one reason.

'My Spiritual Energy has been running a bit too low since yesterday due to fighting multiple Mid Level Demons. I usually didn't care much because Anna always helped me, making the Spiritual Energy consumption low, but this time, I am alone. I have been exerting the Sword Fall and Ignition Sword too much.' Noel knew that these two Spirit Abilities consumed much more Spiritual Energy than Mega Slash or Runes.

Assuming that there would be more beaver or fish demons, he began to save as much Spiritual Energy as possible.

'I see. So, this is how Anna has been fighting this whole time. She kills the demons by using Spiritual Energy as low as possible. Focusing on efficiency instead of overwhelming power. I can understand that now... After all, your stamina can be recovered with just some rest but Spiritual Energy will take a few days to recover.'

Noel took a deep breath and calmed his mind. He wanted to defeat this demon while maintaining his consumption low.

After understanding the tactic, he used his Sword Aura as well as Muscle Strengthening alone.

The beaver seemed to be planning the same. It charged toward Noel and struck him with its claws.

Noel focused on his Ardagan Swordsmanship this whole time.

He swung diagonally to the left, repelling the claws. After that, he made a spin to go past the beaver's defense while striking its other claws.

Seeing such a difference in Noel's fighting style, the beaver demon was startled and tried to move away from Noel.

On the other hand, Noel kept closing their distance and started overwhelming the demon with pure swordsmanship.

Every time he struck the demon, a thought appeared in his mind. That thought gave birth to a realization. One realization gave birth to two more and continued.

'I see. It seems that I have been too focused on my Spirit Abilities as well as the Ancient Spirit Techniques. I have forgotten how I fought Anna for the first time. Back then, I didn't have any Spirit Ability, let alone the Spirit Techniques. I purely relied on my swordsmanship to defeat her, but to no avail because her swordsmanship is far better than me.

'In the recent spar, I wasn't as overwhelmed as I was back then. I forgot the fact that my pure swordsmanship itself is a weapon.

'Now that I think about it, every time I swing, I also increase the count of my Swinging Practice, right? If that's the case, not only can I lower my Spiritual Energy consumption but I can also practice this way.'

This realization opened a huge door in Noel's path as a smile appeared on his face.

Noel kept striking the beaver to overwhelm him with all these swift and precise strikes. Even a Mid Level Demon had a hard time to follow Noel's movement this time.

Little did Noel know, this action of his caused a huge misunderstanding to the two guys who had managed to escape and hide behind the bushes. While wrapping up the wounds, the two guys took a peek at the battle.

They saw the beaver and Noel exchanged blows so quick that they couldn't even imagine their power.

"We never really saw him fighting the demons, but now that I think about it..." The farmer's face became pale, realizing the hardship Noel had to endure in this mission. "He is fighting the demon this hard, and yet, he already killed a dozens of them yesterday. Including the wound that stops him from using that left hand, I can't imagine how hard has he been fighting for this village.

"Do you know anything about the Mid Level Demon?" The farmer asked.

"I don't know much, but it's said that normal soldiers can't go against a Low Level Demon. They need to undergo a harsh training before they can fight against a Low Level Demon. And Mid Level Demon is beyond that..." The guy explained everything he knew.

"I see. Look at him, he's so young... I think he's just around 14 to 15 years old. Yet, he has been fighting for us this hard without complaining. Not sleeping, not taking care of his body... he keeps fighting. I feel ashamed of not doing anything." The farmer bit his lips.

As soon as the wound had been wrapped up, the farmer immediately rose from the ground and tried to reach the gallon that they failed to fill earlier.

"What are you doing?"

"I need to go back to fill this."

"You're injured."

"Even if I can't use one hand, I still have my other hand. I can't lose to a kid like him." The farmer shook his head, determined to go back after the dam was safe.

"You..." The guy was speechless but understood why the farmer was so adamant. Noel's action had truly inspired them, showing that if a kid this young already worked this hard and endangered his life, why would they fear?

He ended up taking the gallon from the farmer's hand.

"Oi, that's my gallon!"

"You're injured, so you should rest there. Although it'll be hard, I'll fill both gallons and bring it back to the village. I'm stronger than you." The guy snorted as if the farmer's spirit had been transferred to him.

Chapter 112 Completion

"Hu..." Noel took a deep breath after killing the last beaver. In this second day, Noel could see that the dam had half destroyed and the water only had a third of its original volume. If he continued working this way, they could wrap everything up by tomorrow.

The longer he waited, the lesser the beaver demon that came to him too, so he expected that he would be able to find every single one of them tomorrow.

Eventually, the time had passed and Noel didn't find a single beaver demon during the third day. But to his surprise, the farmer, who was injured, still tagged along to fetch some water. But this time, he was accompanied by another muscular man that was tasked to get the water. It seemed he was adamant to visit Noel just to check his condition.

And he was the one who had been bringing him food so that Noel didn't feel hungry in the past three days.

Because there was no more beaver coming out of the dam, Noel finally asked them to pass the words to the village chief, telling him that the river had returned to normal.

In that instant, the village chief went all the way to the half-destroyed dam to see it himself.

And as expected, the beaver demon didn't come out anymore, proving that Noel had completed his job.

"Normally, the beaver demons will come out in a few hours interval. But it's been around 16 hours and there's no sign of another beaver again." Noel explained.

"I see... So that means..." The village chief's body was shaken as the plague that had been creeping in his heart disappeared. The trouble that had killed more than twenty people in his village had finally been taken care of. "Thank you... Thank you..."

"It's fine. This is just my job. For now, I'll wait until tonight to confirm my statement. And looking at the water level right now, I'll destroy the rest of the dam tomorrow. It should return to a normal river soon. But I can't do anything about the demon fish..."

"No, no, it's alright. The demon fishes are the demons that have been living with us. No matter how hard you exterminate them, they'll just come back since they come from upstreams. We already know how to deal with them." The village chief shook his head, assuring Noel that he had fulfilled his job.

"Alright. I'll go back when the night arrives and get some rest before leaving tomorrow." Noel nodded with a smile.

"I understand. I'll prepare the proof of completion as well." The village chief promised Noel. "And I'll make sure that you can get a proper rest after all this work. Thank you very much."

Noel saw them off while the farmer remained next to him. It seemed that he had something to talk about.

"Ehm..." The farmer hesitated for a moment before asking politely, "Do you have a time tonight?"

"What do you mean?" Noel tilted his head in confusion.

"Actually, we've been preparing a feast for you. We want to thank you for your hard work. Besides, you've given us that huge fish. So..."

"Ah, you mean that fish." Noel thought for a moment. He thought it would be rude to reject him and there was something that he wanted to witness for the first time, so he accepted the invitation. "I understand. I'll be back an hour after the moon rises, so I have plenty of time."

"I see. Thank you very much." The farmer smiled and hurriedly returned to tell them the good news.

Noel smiled as he watched this enthusiastic guy returning to the village. It was told that he would have a hard time to work in the field anymore, yet, the guy wanted to thank him so much.

He really couldn't believe it.

"Back in the fort, I killed the guy that had been bullying me. Even though what he did wasn't that much related to me, I still killed him. But there is this guy, who is thanking me even though I task him with a job that forces him to step away from his work.

"Am I crazy? Psychopath? Or am I just a normal person and that guy is just overly kind? But then again, there are those kids maintaining their brightness despite experiencing such a situation... There are those women who are strong enough to stand back up after witnessing hell." Noel lowered his head, wondering what was the right thing.

On the one hand, if he didn't eliminate his bully, he would treat the people around him worse than he could imagine. On the other hand, he asked himself whether it was possible to mend the situation?

"This is really hard." Noel let out a sigh. "Still, I'll keep exploring around the world to see numerous kinds of people so that I can get the answer I'm searching for. I promise that I'll use everything I've learned in this journey to treat the people in my future territory better."

This was the reason why Noel managed to wake up his Spirit in an instant. The spirit didn't wake up earlier because he thought his goal was to take revenge for his parents. But he soon learned it wasn't the case.

After taking revenge of his parents, Noel asked himself what he wanted to do? It was at that time, he got an answer. Learning how to govern his future territory was just one of his small goals, not his ultimate goal that woke up his Ice Spirit, Heisk.

Noel clenched his fists, getting fired up.

After that realization, Noel continued watching over the dam, making sure that not a single beaver coming out. He also patrolled around the area but found no demons. After another few hours, he decided to wrap up his mission and return to the village. He was quite exhausted and sleepy after working for three days without sleep.

But when he returned to the village, he found that the lifeless atmosphere that the village had a few days ago had disappeared.

There were lights all around the villages, brightening the area.

The village were brimming with energy as the people walked back and forth, preparing the meal for the feast.

The farmer was the first to greet him as if he knew that Noel would come around this time.

"Welcome back. Please come with me." The farmer smiled.

Chapter 113 Suggestion

,m Noel was led to a certain spot where everyone could see him. He was the honorable knight that saved this village after all.

The people thanked him one by one. Even the pair of kids that wanted water from him before he went to the dam. It was truly such a sight.

Noel received their thanks and eventually managed to find some time to get a good meal.

While eating, the farmer approached him again to thank him for everything he had done.

"Thank you so much, Sir ladre." The farmer lowered his head politely.

"I'm just doing my job. Though, I wonder will you be fine from now on? After all, your hand..." Noel looked at him worriedly.

"Ah, please don't worry about me, Sir. I can still work on something else and my son can take my job on the field too."

"I see." Noel felt a little relieved knowing that the man would be alright from now on. However, Noel also had another thought about this feast. "That's right, do you mind if I know the recipe on how to cook these dishes? They're delicious."

"Ah... I'm sure the people who worked hard on the dishes will be glad to share it with you. And the village chief shouldn't have any problem in writing it down."

"That's great." Noel was happy because if he could keep remembering more and more recipes and cooking it for himself, he would be able to escape from Anna's delicious meal. "And I have one more question to you. What do you think a village like this needs the most?"

"Pardon? I don't quite understand your question."

"While doing this, I want to know more about the people all around the kingdoms. I'm sure that every village, town, big cities, have their own problems. I want to know more about it, so I want your opinion about it."

"Ah!" The farmer nodded with a serious expression. "To be honest, there is not much that we actually need. For us, as long as we can survive during the winter and don't get extorted by taxes, we're already happy."

"Survive the winter..." Noel muttered in a low voice.

"Yes. In the winter, we barely have any harvest. So, it's hard for us to get enough food. We can manage with the firewood, but at least one person always die every winter because of the cold. If there's a prolong winter, we might even experience famine." The farmer sighed.

"But can't you just hunt more animals and store it so that it will become your food supply? The same applies to the field."

"Yes, we can, but our field is limited. So, it's hard to produce that level of food since we need to bring the majority of them to the city for tax."

"I see." Noel took this opinion seriously. For the first time in his life that he started regretting not learning anything from his father. If he worked hard back then and learned various stuff in governing a territory, he would be able to get some answers.

Unfortunately, he could only collect ideas for now before solving the problem one by one.

"It's a good talk, thank you." Noel smiled, thanking him for the opinion.

"Are you going to retire to your room, Sir?"

"Yes."

"The village chief has prepared the room for you and I can lead you there. What do you think?"

"Sounds good to me."

The farmer then led Noel to the village chief's house and opened Noel's room. Although it wasn't good or fancy, the room had enough space to move around and the bed was quite soft as one would expect from the best house of the village.

After that, the farmer finally left Noel so that he could rest.

Noel had washed his body in the dam before going back, so he was already comfortable enough to sleep. But there was one thought lingering in his mind.

Medal: Exceptional Citizen Merit

Requirement: Help 300 Citizens (59/300)

Reward: Exceptional Citizen Medal and 10 Honor Points

"The lowest rank of a noble is a baron. A baron usually have around 40-50 villages along with its own city. Normally, a baron has five thousand people in his jurisdiction. If I somehow become a baron and do something good to my own citizens, I think I can easily finish this mission multiple times.

"And the higher my rank, the more people under my jurisdiction. It's basically farming Honor Points.

"Still..." Noel closed his eyes, remembering all the smiles he received from the villagers. In his heart, he felt happy just to see that smile. Yes, he was just happy that he could help people.

The mission was just a kind of bonus for him.

"After this mission, I know that helping them doesn't mean I need to save them one by one. I just need to solve their problems. That's why if I make a great governing system, I can help them. Then, if they have a problem in their village, I can dispatch soldiers to help them.

"Father, I know that your son was useless in the past. I do regret my laziness in the past, but I promise you that I'll be a better person and become a great lord in the future." Noel smiled as he finally fell asleep, tired from working for three days straight.

The next morning, Noel received the proof of completion from the village chief before going to the dam to destroy the dam.

It seemed a few villagers followed to see the complete destruction of the dam. Noel smiled and cut the dam apart. The water velocity increased a bit, but it should return to a normal river tomorrow.

When Noel cut down the dam, the people cheered because they could finally started fishing again and the water could be used for their daily needs.

Noel waved his hand with a smile as he bid his goodbye to the villagers as he started his journey to the city before visiting the Master Blacksmith.

Chapter 114 Unexpected Surprise

"I have finally arrived." Noel smiled, looking at the village in the distance. It had been a few days ever since he finished the mission.

He went to Astary Town to get his wounds healed. Luckily, he got some Mid Level Demon Crystals, allowing him to get enough money to heal himself.

Since he had been living inside the fort the entire time, he didn't take much interest in this town and immediately left after recovering from the wounds.

After another day of running, Noel finally arrived in front of the village where the Master Blacksmith resided.

As expected from the village that had a Master Blacksmith in it, when Noel saw the farmer outside the village, he could see the power of a good equipment. Plowing the field was much faster and easier because the farmer could easily swing that hoe. The man itself wasn't that muscular, showing that the hoe itself was lighter than a normal one.

'Hoh? It seems that the Master Blacksmith also improved the quality of life for the people around here.' Noel muttered inwardly while looking around the area. The people in this village had a smile on their face.

'Still, there are more people than expected...' Noel also occasionally saw soldiers, hunters, and other people who used weapons for their jobs. 'As expected from a Master Blacksmith, many people wants him to make equipment for them. I wonder if I can get one myself...'

Noel walked to the village, finding people roaming around the area. The building in this village seemed to be sturdier and bigger compared to all the villages he had seen so far.

It was clear that the economy of this village was booming due to the existence of the Master Blacksmith alone.

But when he was about to enter the village, he heard a familiar voice coming from behind.

"Ah... Are you..."

The feminine voice startled even for Noel as he hurriedly turned around and saw the blue-haired siblings. They were the siblings that he saved from the bandits.

"Ah?!" Noel politely nodded. "Hello."

"Thank you again for saving us from those bandits. Without you, we'd have died." The woman politely bowed her head.

"It's fine. I just happened to pass by." Noel shook his head, assuring her that she didn't need to thank him.

Seeing that gesture, the man asked, "By the way, what are you doing here? Are your purpose of visiting this village the same as most visitors?"

"I guess you can say so." Noel nodded his head.

"Ah!" The woman covered her mouth in surprise before giving a suggestion with a smile on her face. "If that's the case, do you want to follow us? This is the least we can do to repay you."

"This..." Noel didn't know whether to accept it or not, considering he didn't know the identity of these two.

"I think we haven't introduced ourselves. My name is Rick and she is Rica. We're from a small merchant group known as Elezes. If you want to talk with the Master Blacksmith, we can set up a meeting for you." The blue haired man stepped up, offering the solution.

Noel thought for a moment before deciding to accept it. "I understand. Thank you very much."

"Please..." Rick extended his hand as if asking him to come together with them. But he paused at the end because he didn't know how to address Noel.

"Iadre. You can call me that."

"Please follow me, Iadre."

Noel nodded and followed these siblings to the village. He expected that it would be hard to meet the Master Blacksmith, considering he had so many customers. However, he had a letter from the commander, so he should be able to get some audience with him without the help of the two siblings.

But seeing their enthusiasm, Noel decided to use the letter as the backup plan if they couldn't bring him to the blacksmith.

As for the smithy itself, the place was located at the outskirts of the village. It wasn't that the Master Blacksmith refused to live in the center of the village, but it was due to the big building as well as the number of visitors. So as to not disturb the villagers, the Master Blacksmith set up the smithy in this corner.

"There are simply too many people here..." Noel muttered in a low voice, looking at the people lining up.

There was a young man standing in front of the smithy who was talking to the people that came to this place. He sometimes rejected them, accepted them or inquired more information.

Noel had become a commoner, so he instinctively lined up to wait for his turn to meet the Master Blacksmith.

But Rica couldn't help but chuckle. "Haha, what are you doing there?"

"Eh?" Noel tilted his head in confusion. "I'm just waiting in line. I mean, isn't that the point?"

"Don't worry. Please follow us." Rica asked him to step off the line as they went straight to the smithy.

Noel hesitated for a while but ultimately followed them. "I understand."

'They're so confident and don't seem to be arrogant, so there might be a reason for them to be this confident.' Noel thought while walking.

"Rejected! Go away!" The man in front of the smithy chased away another person while asking the person behind him to come.

"This is really hard."

"How do you even impress the Master Blacksmith?"

"We need to wait for hours just to get rejected."

"It's so sad."

"Look! There are three people who are cutting the lines!"

"What? Do they not know that the people from the smithy don't like people skipping the lines?"

When Noel listened to their words, he wanted to suggest them to go back since he didn't want to have any trouble, considering he had put a lot of effort to get the recommendation letter from the commander.

At the same time, the person in front of the smithy also noticed them due to the people talking about their action. He had frowned because this action displeased him.

"Hey look, another one that will be turned away. And that anger... They're going to be blacklisted from this place."

"Serve them right!"

The people were sneering at Noel and the two siblings.

However, Rick opened his mouth, greeting the angry guy and shocking everyone in this place. "Uncle Ben, it's been a while. How is Father?"

Chapter 115 Master Blacksmith

"Uncle Ben, it's been a while. How is Father?"

"Huh?" Noel widened his eyes in surprise. The rest of the people also stared at him in disbelief.

They doubted him until the angry guy bowed his head and shouted, "Welcome back, young master."

"..." Noel never thought that the two guys he met by chance was actually a bigshot. A Master Blacksmith was a prestigious title because there were only less than twenty people who had this title.

So, their title was similar to that of a noble since even nobles didn't dare to offend them easily. After all, the other party could simply flee from this place and move to another place, supplying them weapons and equipment to take revenge against the noble.

And the children of the Master Blacksmith was treated like that of the children in the noble family, except for the fact that they weren't an official noble appointed by the kingdom.

"This is..." Noel sucked a cold breath, staring in disbelief.

"Are you surprised?" Rica smirked, amused by Noel's reaction.

"Y-yeah. Who won't be?" Noel shook his head helplessly.

"Anyway, let's come in. You want to see my father, right?" Rica waved her hand as Rick seemed to have conveyed his words to the guy.

The angry guy then led them in, stunning everyone else.

"What's that?"

"How does that guy know the Master Blacksmith's children?"

"We need to know that information so that we can get this kind of treatment!"

There was an uproar outside as they were staring at Noel intensely, trying to pry all sorts of information from the guy but to no avail.

Meanwhile, the inside of the smithy was more al than Noel thought.

He thought that the blacksmith would just be heating the metal and hammering it, but when he entered the smithy, he could see a guy who was releasing fire from its palm to melt the metal. There was even a guy who was using a big hammer with his Spiritual Energy to boost his power.

"This is..." Noel sucked a hot breath and couldn't help but cough a few times because he wasn't used to this kind of environment.

"What's wrong?" Rica asked.

"It's just surprising that these people here are using Spiritual Energy..." Noel narrowed his eyes. "Some even have awakened their Spirits."

"The blacksmiths are divided into three classes. Normal Blacksmith, Veteran Blacksmith, and Master Blacksmith. Normal Blacksmith is someone who has just finished their apprenticeship while Veteran Blacksmith is the one who has worked for at least a decade.

"But there is a hidden requirement for a Veteran Blacksmith... They need to be able to use Spiritual Energy because the metal is harder than you think and there are some special equipment that can be made too.

"If you manage to awaken your Spirits, you have the chance to create a Spirit Weapon, which basically can do something special when infusing your Spiritual Energy. As for Master Blacksmith, I don't think I need to explain it. They're beyond Veteran Blacksmith and can create something better than Spirit Equipment." Rica explained.

"I see." Noel nodded with a serious expression, understanding the gist of the job.

"And who do you bring this time, Rica?!" A deep voice suddenly startled them. The voice contained anger and annoyance.

"!!!" Rica's body trembled as she turned around stiffly. "F-Father."

Noel immediately turned around and saw a muscular man walking toward him. The man had a tall body and bald head, but his thick beard increased the intensity of his gaze. He was far different than Rick and Rica to the point he thought they were not blood related.

"He has helped us from the bandits, so we bring him to you to thank him." Rica hurriedly explained. This was the first time Rica stuttered as if she was scared of this man.

"And do you think I haven't seen people paying the bandits to fake a raid?" He snorted. There were already numerous times that their family were in danger because of people faking this attack just to take advantage of them, so he had some prejudice for people like Noel.

However, Rick raised his hand to stop his father. "It's different this time, Father."

Still, even though he didn't like people like Noel, he was open for discussion. It was proven that he still listened to Rick.

He asked, "What's the difference?"

"The bandits captured and used the demons to raid us," explained Rick with a grim expression.

"Huh?" The Master Blacksmith widened his eyes. "You aren't lying to me right now?"

"Do you think I'll be joking this time?" Rick shook his head.

The Master Blacksmith closed his eyes for a moment before walking to Noel. "Your name?"

"Iadre." Noel hurriedly answered and took out the letter. "Actually, I have a recommendation letter."

"Do you know that a Master Blacksmith is a kind of noble?" He asked but still accepted Noel's letter before glancing at the seal. "Hmm?"

The moment he noticed this seal, he fell silent and opened the letter.

With just a single glance, Rick and Rica also noticed that blue seal that symbolized a certain army. "Demon Banner Army?!"

Rica looked at Noel dumbfoundedly, "You are from the Demon Banner Army? No wonder you're so strong, especially against the demons."

Before Noel could answer, the Master Blacksmith asked, "The materials?"

Noel took off his bag and showed the glimpse of the material inside the bag.

The Master Blacksmith only took a glance of the item before asking again, "Your name?"

"Iadre."

"I know that already. I mean your real name." The Master Blacksmith narrowed his eyes.

"Real name?" Rick and Rica widened their eyes. Although they had expected this because Noel was using a masquerade, it was still surprising to hear his real name.

Unfortunately for them, Noel said playfully, "I'm sorry, I don't think I understand what you're talking about."

The Master Blacksmith read the letter again before summoning a fire to burn the letter so that no one could read it. After that, he pointed at the door behind him. "Follow me."

Chapter 116 Argument

The Master Blacksmith led Noel to a separate room where the Master Blacksmith worked. The room was quite spacious, considering it was only for one person. The tools lying on the table were excluding Spiritual Energy, showing that each tool was a Spirit Tools that could create a better quality items.

Despite such an extraordinary tools and room, the Master Blacksmith calmly headed to the huge table in the corner and started pushing away the tools on it.

"Take your material out. I need to inspect it more."

"Father?" Rick narrowed his eyes, not understanding why his father suddenly acted this way after reading the letter.

However, Noel still took out the item since he was the only person that could work with this material. He laid down the wood on the table and said, "This is the material."

The middle-aged man lowered his head and inspected it. He observed the material, touched it gently, poured some Spiritual Energy before asking, "What kind of equipment do you want from this?"

"I want something thin, but sturdy enough to protect me. It's like an armor that I can hide underneath my clothes."

The middle-aged man thought for a moment and said, "That's possible. The material is quite sturdy and its ability to channel the Spiritual Energy is splendid. The armor is thin, so we need to rely on the Spiritual Energy to reduce the damage to your body... As long as you don't mind the pain coming from every blow, I can make an armor piece with this."

"I've gotten used to pain." Noel nodded, agreeing to him.

"Alright." He paused and observed Noel.

"What's wrong?" Noel narrowed his eyes and stepped back as if he was being seen through by this guy.

"How in the world someone like you killed an Ancient Demon?"

"!!!" The ones who got shocked wasn't Noel alone but also Rick and Rica.

"What did you say? Ancient Demon?" Rick was dumbstruck by this revelation. He perfectly knew what kind of existence the Ancient Demon was. Noel was strong but not that strong to handle an Ancient Demon.

"If we're talking about Ancient Level Demon, they're supposed to be a Demon that can destroy an entire kingdom, right?" Rica sucked a cold breath, looking at Noel as if looking at a monster.

"I am sorry, but I don't know what you're talking about." Noel immediately played dumb and regained his calm.

The Master Blacksmith fell silent for one minute before saying, "Well, I guess that's fine with me."

He suddenly moved to the other corner and picked up a pickaxe. While resting the pickaxe on his shoulder, he turned to Noel and said, "Alright. Come with me then. Let's go to the mine not far from here."

"Father?" Rick and Rica were confused because mining wasn't supposed to be his job.

"What? I do whatever I want just like you!" The middle-aged man glared at them.

"..." Rick and Rica felt embarrassed after that glare.

"See? I have asked you to become a blacksmith like me, but both of you choose to become a merchant. Do you want to be rich so much? Money is not everything. If you want to be rich, you can also gain it by becoming a Master Blacksmith, but don't be too fixated on it."

"We're not fixated with money! Becoming a merchant is like a calling for us!" Rick answered, raising his voice.

"Then, what are you planning to do with all that money? You can't spend it if you're dead. Give it to your children for inheritances? Spoil your children with money? Those children will be too spoiled in the future and ruin the family too by spending a lot of money without care. Instead of money, why don't you become someone good in this life? I might not be rich, but look at the village, it's brimming with people and the villagers are happy!"

p Rick couldn't reply to his statement. He didn't even know why he would become a merchant other than the fact that he was just good at it.

Rica could only lower her head, not participating in this conversation.

"Instead of piling up money, why don't you use your ability to make the others around you happy? That's how I've been living this whole life and it's the reason why people like you so much. Even if I need to reject the riches and other things, I still have the need to become a good person." He sighed and walked away, disappointed.

Rick and Rica hang their heads low.

Meanwhile, Noel was stuck in between. On the one hand, he was grateful that the two siblings brought him to their father. On the other hand, he needed to follow him because he needed the equipment.

Noel looked at them back and forth, wondering what to choose. Suddenly, Rica, even though she was still looking down, pushed Noel gently as if telling him to follow her father.

Noel sighed and decided to leave the smithy with their father.

They walked out with a back door so that they didn't meet any person on the way.

While crossing the small forest, the Master Blacksmith opened his mouth. "My name is Roel. What is your real name brat?"

Seeing that no one was here, the Master Blacksmith thought he could get to know Noel's real name, but Noel shook his head and said, "I'm sorry, Sir."

"So, that's how it is. It seems that you have a hard life." The Master Blacksmith sighed.

When Noel observed his emotion, it looked like he had empathy and sympathy to his children. This affection made Noel feel that there was another ulterior motive from his action.

However, it wasn't his place to ask, so he remained silent.

The middle-aged man also felt Noel's gaze and was thankful for his consideration. But still, he looked up and sighed, asking, "Sorry that you had to witness a family bickering. It was supposed to be a secret, but I ended up making a fuss with it. I am a bad parent, ain't I?"

Chapter 117 A Small Talk

"..." Noel didn't know what to say. But this affection was something that he missed as well. Whether it was just a small bickering or the true care of his parents, he missed them because he no longer had any parents. "Well, it's not my place to say it, but it seems that you have your reason for talking like that. And I can't call it 'blowing up' from my perspective."

"No. It's blowing up because I have prejudice with merchant profession." Roel shook his head helplessly. "My wife was a merchant like them. She wasn't a big merchant, but her workers loved her and were loyal to her."

"But one day, she headed to a city and was attacked by a bandit group. Although she managed to return to our home, she passed away not long after. Back then, there were four arrows planted on her body and her right hand was gone."

"Can you imagine what kind of feeling to see your wife like that? And that's because she managed to return... If she didn't return, I couldn't imagine what kind of hell she would experience as a woman inside a bandit group. And I wouldn't even get to see her body for a proper burial. That's why I went to a small village like this... I didn't want them to become a merchant by seeing them in the city."

"..." Noel recounted what he found inside the bandit hideout. It was truly hell to the point he wondered how those strong women he rescued still had the will to fight for another day. Even when he encouraged them, he didn't expect them to keep fighting. That was why he offered that axe.

He understood the reason why Roel didn't want his children to follow his late wife's path.

"I just want them to be content by working as a blacksmith after seeing the smile of the people around them. I just want them to like it." Roel scratched the back of his head. "It seems I've said too much. I thought about explaining it to you just because you saved them from the bandits... I couldn't help it."

"It's not my place to say this, but my family was a former merchant as well. But they still supported a useless person like me... That might be the reason I gained so much determination just from thinking about it. That's probably the reason I don't hate them. A simple support is all we need." Noel made a small smile, remembering his parents.

"A simple support huh..." Roel fell silent for a moment before shaking his head helplessly. "Here I am thinking explaining to you as a simple gesture for saving my children, but I guess I'm now getting lectured by you."

"No... That's not what—" Before Noel finished explaining himself, Roel interrupted him by saying, "Thank you. Thanks to you, I've realized something."

"You're welcome." Noel also felt embarrassed because he didn't think much about his opinion.

"Anyway..." Roel stopped while pointing ahead. "That's the mine."

Noel could see that the mine had been protected by people and there were two people going back and forth while bringing cart filled with rocks.

"Follow me, I need you to protect me while I am mining the ores. There are some Low Level Demons that infested the rocks, so it might be something that you haven't fought as a knight in the Demon Banner Army."

"I understand. I'll do my best to protect you." Noel nodded with a serious expression. He was ready to fight any Low Level Demons, thinking he wouldn't lose against them.

However, the reality couldn't be any different.

After entering the mine, they headed straight to the lowest level. The oxygen was quite thin compared to the upper level and the temperature was quite high. Even Noel needed to roll up his sleeves.

Roel handed him over a thin cloth to cover his mouth and nose so that he wouldn't inhale the dust.

When Roel just started mining, a demon suddenly popped out of the wall.

Even Noel was surprised by this demon because it was truly a rock. The rock looked like a cube but it had eyes and a crystal on its head. The demon seemed to be able to leap from one place to another.

"It's going to hurt if that demon hit you," Roel warned him as he already began to mine the ore.

Meanwhile, Noel took out his sword and covered it with Sword Aura.

"Hoh? What a sharp sword you have there... I guess I can understand why you're able to defeat a weakened Ancient Demon Tree." Roel smirked.

"!!!" Noel's body trembled when he mentioned the weakened Ancient Demon Tree.

"Your face is asking me how do I know about the demon... Well, the letter only told me that the demon was an Ancient Demon Tree. After inspecting it, I could see that the trace of Spiritual Energy is low. If we're talking about the real Ancient Demon Tree, the wood should be brimming with Spiritual Energy.

"Even your sharp sword won't be able to do anything with it. So, the material grade has gone so bad that it's only as strong as Mid Level Demon. But with my skill, I shouldn't have any problem to make you an armor that can protect you from Advance Level Demon. That should be enough, right?"

"Yes." Noel nodded with a serious expression.

"Alright. You should work immediately. Don't underestimate that demon."

"..." Noel realized that the demon had leaped toward him, so he immediately blocked it with his sword. But soon he realized as his sword was pushed back. 'It's heavier than I thought.'

Noel stomped the ground to gain enough power to stop the charge, making sure the demon didn't get past him.

After that, he pushed the demon back and took a deep breath to calm down. Normally, he would attack the demon, but he was protecting someone this time, so he remained in his position and just took a defensive position.

'It seems that he's quite proficient in his job. But what about his movement?' Roel thought. He was mining while observing Noel at the same time. 'Though, I won't underestimate the mineral demon because even if it's only a Low Level Demon, its defense is equal to that of a Mid Level Demon.'

Chapter 118 Tips

Noel struck the demon with his blade covered in Sword Aura once again. This time, he had enough preparation to make a full swing to destroy this demon.

Clink!

The clicking sound echoed inside the tunnel as Noel knocked the demon to the ground.

However, his sharp blade only left a small dent on the monster. Even the Mid Level Demon like the beavers would have their bodies cut, so he was quite surprised that a Low Level Demon could withstand his attack.

Although he understood that the demon was a mineral, but it was still too much.

"Huh?" Noel narrowed his eyes and kicked the demon back to its original position while looking at it with a dumbfounded expression. "Huh?"

The demon didn't stop as it immediately jumped to Noel's stomach after landing on the ground.

Noel took a deep breath and used his Mega Slash, the strongest attack he had.

Clink!

Noel ignored the clicking sound and focused on the demon itself. Even then, the demon was still intact. The dent was deeper but it was nowhere enough to crush or cut the demon.

"It's not enough?" Noel frowned as his sword was soon enveloped by fire.

"Hoh?" Roel raised his eyebrows, impressed by what Noel showed. The Spiritual Energy couldn't release any flame unless the Spirit in one's body had awakened. That was why he knew that Noel was pretty impressive to be able to awaken his spirit when he was only an Apprentice Knight. He thought, 'Now that I think about it, when did this year's admission start again?'

He soon realized that Noel seemed to have awakened his Spirit not long after the admission started, meaning that he had this kind of ability just by training a month or two. That was why he was sure that Noel managed to kill the Ancient Demon Tree by himself.

Ignition Sword.

A huge blast occurred from the sword, causing the wall to shake a bit. Even Roel was startled as he looked around, making sure that nothing fall on top of them.

The explosion crushed the demon, but the first thing Roel did when the dust had settled down was shouted in anger. "You brat! Why did you use an explosion inside a tunnel?"

"Sorry." Noel immediately apologized, knowing his mistake. He just never thought that the Low Level Demon would give him this much trouble. He forgot that he was inside the cave.

"The dust will be kicked up and enter your lungs, causing you to die. Or the rocks can crumble and fall on top of you. In the worst case, you're stuck in this place because the exit is blocked. Either way, don't use a freaking explosion inside a cave!" Roel berated Noel with cold hard fact.

Noel couldn't say anything as he agreed with Roel's opinion. There was no excuse.

"Are you seriously having a trouble against a mere Low Level Demon?" Roel shook his head helplessly, not telling Noel that the demon's defense was equal to Mid Level Demon.

"I apologize. It seems that I have troubled you." Noel apologized again.

Seeing Noel this obedience made Roel feel awkward and lose the will to lecture him. Instead of giving him a long lecture, Roel put down his pickaxe as if he wanted to give up.

"That... I apologize. I'll make sure that I don't use any more explosions and defend you from the demons." Noel thought Roel dropping his pickaxe meant he had given up because of disappointment, so he tried to convince him.

However, what Roel truly wanted to do was to defeat the demon.

"You seriously have a hard time in defeating this Low Level Demon? You can't control your Spiritual Energy that much?" Roel asked.

Noel looked down, embarrassed. "Yes. I can use some Spirit Abilities and Techniques, but..."

"Instead of learning more and more Spirit Abilities and Techniques, what do you need right now is the control over Spiritual Energy!" Roel stated with a serious expression. "What Spirit Technique can you use?"

"Muscle Strengthening and two Ancient Spirit Techniques." Noel explained.

"Ancient Spirit Techniques?" Roel narrowed his eyes. Although he never learned any Ancient Spirit Techniques, he knew they were good stuff. But their potential was wasted on Noel right now.

"I'll teach you the reason why Control is one of the most important things to learn." Roel picked up a small hammer on his waist and saw another demon in the middle of the tunnel. He released his own killing intent as if picking a fight with the demon.

Without hesitation, the demon charged at him. Noel obviously couldn't allow the blacksmith to fight, so he hurriedly stepped forward, only to be stopped by Roel.

"Just watch this!" Roel raised his hammer. "First. Muscle Strengthening Technique, it's a perfect basic Spirit Technique that you have to learn. By channeling the Spiritual Energy in all direction, you can surpass the limit of normal people. But what if all that Spiritual Energy goes to one spot?"

Roel gathered all the Spiritual Energy into his arms as he swung that hammer downwards, knocking the demon to the ground. This time, the demon was half-crushed.

Noel widened his eyes in shock. The hammer was ordinary and the blacksmith wasn't someone who was able to fight, so it was clear that gathering enough Spiritual Energy in one arm could allow him to harness even more power.

"This is just a Muscle Strengthening Technique. In that case, how about releasing that energy out like enveloping your sword with the Spiritual Energy? Instead of the whole sword, what if you gather that Spiritual Energy into one place?"

Roel asked while doing the exact same thing as he was talking about. The Spiritual Energy was concentrated in the tip of his hammer as he crushed the demon into pieces and created a small crater on the ground.

"This is the result. Can you see the advantage of controlling your Spiritual Energy? There is a few more steps beyond that, but this should be perfect for you right now. I'll give you some tips on how to control

your Spiritual Energy. I think this is a perfect reward for saving my children as well as making me realize something important earlier." Roel smirked.

Chapter 119 Monstrous Talent

"Yes, Sir!" Noel felt excited. Not only did Roel agree to make an equipment for him, but he also planned to teach him, it was an opportunity that he couldn't miss out.

"Alright." Roel returned to pick up his pickaxe before handing it to Noel. "Here is the deal. You mine the ore when there's no demon. If I spot any demon, you drop it down and handle the demon."

"..." Noel was speechless for a second. In an instant, his opinion in Roel dropped, thinking that Roel planned to take advantage of him this whole time by making him doing everything. However, he soon understood why Roel wanted him to mine the ore.

"Don't tell me, you want me to try controlling my Spiritual Energy so that I can mine the ore easier?" Noel asked.

"Of course. Is there any other reason?" Roel tilted his head in confusion.

After getting that answer, Noel felt embarrassed to even think that Roel wanted to take advantage of him.

"I understand." Noel nodded with a serious expression. He held the pickaxe and sheathed his sword. "What should I do?"

"Try to hit the wall a few times so that you can understand the feel of the pickaxe first. After that, you can release your Spiritual Energy to cover that pickaxe. I'll teach you how to control it as soon as you get used to it."

,m "Alright." Noel began as soon as he agreed to those steps.

As expected, wielding a pickaxe was far different than that of a sword. It had two weights in the front and back, causing the swing to be much faster and using more energy at the same time.

Due to the difference in length, he also had a hard time pinpointing his target.

Only after an hour that he finally got used to the pickaxe.

As soon as he received the confirmation that he could use Spiritual Energy, he immediately applied the Sword Aura to the pickaxe. As he expected, the first time he applied the Spirit Ability, he failed.

"Hmm?" Noel furrowed his eyebrows. He recounted the feeling earlier. Just like his sword, he could easily channel the handle. But due to the head coming in two directions, the Spiritual Energy was dispersed there because a sword didn't have this kind of part.

"It's pretty hard, isn't it? But covering the pickaxe with your Spiritual Energy shouldn't take that long, right?"

"Yes, I just haven't gotten used to such a shape. I should be able to do it after a few tries." Noel nodded in agreement as he immediately started working. But he could only cover the pickaxe thirty minutes later, making him slightly disappointed. "I'm sorry for taking that long."

"It's alright. Take your time." Roel smiled. "This is the first way to increase in your control. It's to apply the Spiritual Energy into random objects. A pickaxe, a bag, a shoe, anything! Cover them with your Spiritual Energy.

"With different shapes, you need a different approach. Once you have gotten a hang of different objects, you'll gradually understand the flow of the Spiritual Energy.

"For example, you want to gather the Spiritual Energy to the tip of your sword... Then, how about changing the approach. Instead of a whole sword, I'll take the shattered blade and give you the pointed tip. Isn't it the same as you gathering your Spiritual Energy to the tip of the sword?

"Once you have gotten used to the shape, you can understand how to move the Spiritual Energy around in that shape, which gradually increases your control over the Spiritual Energy."

Noel listened to his words and noticed something. "Does that mean I can do this?"

Noel suddenly held the pickaxe in its head instead of the handle. This way, he would need to conjure the Spiritual Energy in a bit different way than the previous one.

As expected, he failed at the first time.

"Ah!" Noel scratched the back of his head, finding the trouble.

Roel smiled and agreed to Noel's statement. However, he was screaming inwardly, 'Huh? Who the heck is this guy? How can he learn so fast? My father asked me to cover the hammer with my Spiritual Energy and it took me three days for me to master it. And this guy could do it in thirty minutes? He's a monster. How high is his conversion rate? His talent is so high.'

Roel was also impressed by Noel who understood the principle and immediately applied it to his training.

He then gave another advice. "Then, let's move on to the second tip. Place your right hand on your left arm."

Noel dropped the pickaxe and placed the right hand on his left arm. "Like this?"

"Yes! After that, use your right hand to channel the Spiritual Energy and cover your arm with Spiritual Energy like how you did it with the pickaxe."

Noel had gotten used to the pickaxe shape. Since his arm had a similar shape, he somehow covered his arm perfectly.

"Eh? This is..." Noel widened his eyes in shock. It was similar to the Spirit Aura Breathing that covered his body with a thin layer of Spiritual Energy, but because he was using Sword Aura, the energy was far denser. It should be able to withstand an even stronger impact.

"See that? I am working as a blacksmith and the application of Spiritual Energy is far different here even though we are using the same Spirit Technique as you guys. In my opinion, the Spirit Technique itself is

versatile... you are the one limiting the Spirit Technique, not the other way around. Just because the description is like that and the people use it that way doesn't mean that's the only way to use the Spirit Technique," Roel explained.

"I see... So that's how it is..." Noel got an idea as he immediately picked up the pickaxe.

His right hand held the handle while his left hand was on the head. This time, he poured the Spiritual Energy to both parts at the same time as if he was wielding two swords.

As he expected, the pickaxe was now covered with Spiritual Energy completely. It was even faster than when he did it from the handle.

Even Roel widened his eyes in shock, staring at Noel dumbfoundedly. There was only a single word in his mind.

'Monster!'

Chapter 120 Explanation

"Keep at it!" Roel shouted.

"Yes!" Noel replied while jumping to the side. He poured the Spiritual Energy into the sword but thought that the sword was actually a short sword, so that when he poured the Spiritual Energy, the Spiritual Energy would only cover half of the sword.

With a Spiritual Energy like this, he would have an easier time to defend himself in that area.

The mineral demon jumped to him, so Noel struck the demon with the lower part of the blade where the Spiritual Energy was concentrated.

To his surprise, the dent this time was as deep as when he used Mega Slash even though Sword Aura couldn't contend against his Mega Slash in terms of destructive power.

Seeing such a dent on the demon made him excited. He couldn't help but imagine the time he could use the Mega Slash with that kind of pinpoint Spiritual Energy. The offensive power would skyrocketed in that area, allowing him to destroy his opponent.

This trip was totally worth it even if he didn't have the equipment.

Noel continued fighting this way as he kept striking the demon until the damage was enough to kill this Low Level Demon.

"Hu..." Noel took a deep breath and sheathed his sword.

"So, what do you think about your performance?"

"It's taking a toll in my mind since I have to keep the Spiritual Energy in that place continuously. The burden is far above what I was doing. However, I can see that the offensive power is overwhelming. If I get used to it, it shouldn't be a problem. And the hardest part is to infuse the part that is not directly touching my hand.

"Right now, I am imagining this sword is a short sword, so the Spiritual Energy is still connected to the handle and my hand. But the sword's striking point is at the upper part to the tip of the sword. If I want to concentrate the Spiritual Energy, it won't connect to my hand anymore." Noel sighed, feeling the trouble ahead.

"That's where you are wrong. It's impossible for you to control it if it's not connected to your body, considering your body is the supplier of the Spiritual Energy." Roel shook his head, trying to correct Noel.

"Huh? But..."

"Listen to me first." Roel stopped him and took out his hammer. He then poured the Spiritual Energy into this hammer and concentrated it on the hammer's head. However, Noel found something surprising the second time he saw this.

"What is this..." Noel pointed at the thin line that connected the hand to the concentration point.

"That's the trick to control the Spiritual Energy. You just have to create a line to connect them, allowing you to control their movement." Roel smirked and raised three fingers. "You can use a rope as stage one of your training to understand how to make such a line. Then move to a smaller one like a thread before going for nothing."

Noel looked down, thinking. He finally understood the mechanism, but even for him, it would be hard to master it.

Seeing Noel's serious face, Roel smiled and patted his shoulder. "Anyway, it's over. Let's go back to the surface. We're already like nine hours here, so it's better to leave the mine right now."

"Eh?" Noel widened his eyes. "But the ores..."

"I've picked some that I can use. I'll just tell my workers to bring the rest up later."

"So, we didn't need to mine so much ore this whole time?"

"Yes."

"Then, why did you ask me to mine the ore?" Noel asked while furrowing his eyebrows.

Roel smiled and grabbed Noel's body starting from his arms, legs, and eventually his body.

"Swift hands, flexible joints, quick movement on the arm. The legs are basically the same because you make more movements that you need to. I don't say they're waste movements since you are using small steps to maneuver around to make yourself unpredictable."

"Then, there is your body. Your body seems to be able to react to an attack. When there's a rock almost hitting your body from mining, your body will tilt to the side to avoid it. The same as monster. Your fighting style requires you a lot of movements.

"So, I need to create a thin... a very thin armor to avoid hindering your movement as well as hide it underneath your clothes. You surely don't like to look so buff unnaturally, right?

"But at the same time, I can't give you a weak armor since it'll be useless to protect you from a sharp object. It's the same as leaving yourself vulnerable.

"Hence, I'll compress the wood as much as possible. With that kind of density, the armor will be slightly heavier, but it should be hard enough to withstand a sharp object.

"And I'll make three adjustments with my Spirit. The first will be the defensive power. By infusing your Spiritual Energy, you can enhance the armor. This way, you don't need to fear even if your opponent use the Spiritual Energy.

"Then, I need to apply another enhancement in the weight. I can't really make you go with that much of weight. You are not a heavy soldier unit after all. Then, last adjustment is in the pain.

"With an armor that thin, although it can protect you from the immediate danger, it's still extremely painful. So, I'll redirect the force to the entire armor so that the pain won't be too overwhelming for you." Roel explained the reason why he had been asking Noel to do his job.

It turned out he was assessing Noel's ability and fighting style. This way, he would understand what kind of armor did Noel need.

"Ah!" Noel also understood the meaning and immediately apologized. "I'm sorry."

"It's fine. I wanted to tell you about it, but then again, you might get too worked up or not use all your power... So, I didn't tell you. I wanted to see your full strength." Roel explained with a chuckle. "Though, the armor itself is hard to make since I need to compress the Ancient Demon Tree. If I rush it, the armor will become too brittle. So, it'll take around two to three months before the armor is completed. Can you wait that long?"

Noel thought for a moment and nodded. "Yes."