

S vs Rebirth 161

Chapter 161 Noel's Strength

"Aooo!" The wolf let out another howl before charging toward Noel.

Noel hurriedly used another Chain Bind Rune to stop the charge. As expected, the demon immediately changed its direction and looped around to attack him from the side.

Noel had predicted this and struck to the side.

Mega Slash.

The wolf sensed a danger from this swing and immediately tilted its body to the ground, avoiding the strike. Noel took this opportunity to spin his body and kick the demon.

He wanted to kick the head, but the demon was fast enough to tilt its body again, avoiding the worst case scenario. The body received the kick, but the tough skin managed to absorb most impact.

After getting kicked, the demon leaped back to distance himself from Noel.

It was clear that the demon was scared of Noel's Chain Bind Rune. The Undying Mushroom Demon surely shared the vision of the wolf, since it realized the wolf couldn't escape from the chains if it got captured. This was something he could take advantage on.

Without hesitation, Noel made another Chain Bind Rune to capture the wolf, but the wolf continuously avoided it. If this continued, Noel would exhaust all his Spiritual Energy before defeating the wolf.

However, the continuous usage of Chain Bind Rune had finally shown its effect.

When the wolf leaped to the side, its feet tripped on a chain that stuck in the tree.

"Ao-?!" The wolf was confused and realized why Noel never stopped infusing the Spiritual Energy to the Chain Bind Rune he had used this whole time. Noel wanted to use the chains to restrict its movements.

As soon as it recognized Noel's intention, it finally noticed how many chains Noel had spread this whole time.

Noel had used nine Chain Bind Runes and each rune released two chains. There were eighteen chains all around him that could restrict the movement.

With this kind of chain, the wolf understood that Noel had made him subconsciously avoid the chains. That was why when it tried to loop around to strike Noel's side, Noel could strike him faster than ever.

Noel's chains had restricted any attack from the left side and his back, so the wolf had no choice but to go to his right. That was when Noel moved one step ahead.

And now that Noel had covered all directions with chains, there was no place to escape.

Noel smirked and swung his sword, releasing a sharp sword strike toward the wolf.

"!!!" The wolf hurriedly stood up and avoided this attack, but when the sword strike touched the ground, it bounced a few times and continued to chase after the demon.

It turned out the chains had another purpose beside restraining the demon's movement. With the gap between the chains, the demon had to position itself to the gap so that it could move around.

But Noel's Bouncing Spiritual Slash had the perfect size to move between the gaps. In other words, the Bouncing Spiritual Slash could become far faster than an Advanced Level Demon in this situation.

Noel smirked and muttered, "Die."

The wolf demon panicked because the hunter and the prey position had reversed. Noel was now the hunter.

Just like how Noel killed his first demon despite not being able to fight it head-on, he just had to create an environment that allowed to kill them.

As if trying to kill his joy, a barrier suddenly appeared next to the wolf and turned into a wall that stopped the wolf's movement.

"!!!" Noel noticed the barrier and saw the Bouncing Spiritual Slash pierced the wolf's body and pinned it to the barrier. He clicked his tongue and used his fastest speed to leap to the wolf and used his Mega Slash to kill the wolf in one strike.

"Ao—" The wolf wanted to howl for one last time, but Noel had cut its head, killing the demon.

Before looking at the barrier, Noel still had one job. Without hesitation, he retracted all the Chain Bind Runes and headed straight to the demon located by his Demon Hunter Medal.

He summoned the snowflake again after noticing the demon tried to escape.

The snowflake burst out and froze the entire area, including the demon.

As expected of an Advanced Level Demon, Undying Mushroom Demon, even though it was frozen, it didn't die that easily. In fact, the ice was gradually corrupted by the mushroom and shattered into pieces. The Undying Mushroom Demon managed to escape from the ice in just a second.

"Tsk." Noel clicked his tongue and used the Four Points Circulation on his feet to catch up to the demons.

He was surprised that the demon was actually just a small mushroom. To think such a dangerous demon was just a small mushroom, he didn't know what to say.

However, Noel used the Sword Fall and made in front of the mushroom, letting the demon to crash to the sword. He then stabbed the demon with his sword and pinned the demon to the sword until it died.

"..." Noel took a deep breath when he confirmed its death through the system.

Meanwhile, Anna and Layla were standing on top of the tree while watching the whole thing.

Anna furrowed her eyebrows. Her expression turned grim because of what she had witnessed.

'Noel's strength is not comparable to an Advanced Level Demon. That's a fact. If this is a plain, the Advanced Level Demon won't fall. Even so, it doesn't change the fact that Noel could kill the demon even without our help.

'If he doesn't have the strength to fight them, he just has to create an environment where he can kill the demon. This is why Noel is strong.

'In my previous life, my strength was above him most of the time, but I always ended up struggling to fight him. And with my intervention, Noel has become stronger far faster than his previous life. If I'm slacking just for one bit, I'm afraid that Noel will surpass me soon even with all my memory. What is Noel's secret? I know that it's something beyond his talent... A secret that allows him to keep up with my strength that has been boosted by my previous life's memory.'

Unbeknownst to them, Noel and Anna had started suspecting each other's secret: the system and the reincarnation.

Chapter 162 Victory

Roar!

Roar!

"Attack them!"

"Hurry up!"

The demons were still skirmishing the city. Because they had been fighting since yesterday, they were already pretty tired. There were some who even thought that the Saintess had abandoned them.

"Don't give up!"

"The Saintess will bring us victory."

"Haaa!"

The Holy Knights kept raising their spirits to avoid the worst possible scenario. The Saintess wouldn't abandon them, so they had to stop the demons no matter what.

Roar!

Bam!

One of the demons somehow reached the top of the wall and crushed the top part before trying to jump down to the city.

"Keep the demon here and kill it!"

"Don't let the people die!"

"Attack!"

The soldiers and the Holy Knights immediately headed straight to the demon.

When the Holy Knights tried to attack the demon, the latter somehow stood still as if its mind was blank, not knowing what to do.

"Huh?"

"The demon didn't move?"

"The demon allowed us to kill it?"

The soldiers were confused because this never happened in the past few weeks. However, they soon heard a shout from the soldiers.

"Wait!"

"Those demons! Those demons are fleeing?"

"!!!" All soldiers immediately went to the edge to confirm what they had said. Low Level Demons might not have intelligence and would attack anything before them. But their instinct didn't instruct them to attack a wall.

Upon that realization, the demons were confused on what to do and saw the forest, trying to return to his habitat.

Of course, not all demons would run back to their habitat. Some of them stayed and kept fighting against the soldiers, following their instinct to prey upon the humans.

"Only a portion of them return!"

"A portion? Are you blind? It's more than half. Look at the other sides too!"

The soldiers were scrambling on top of the wall while checking each other's situation. They reported the same. More than half of the demons returned to the forest as if they didn't have anything more to do.

It didn't take too long for them to realize that all the mushrooms in the demons' bodies had died. In other words, the demons were not under control anymore.

"There are no more mushrooms. They're not controlled anymore."

"In other words, the ones attacking us are just a normal Low Level Demons who only act upon instinct!"

"Listen up, soldiers! There is only one reason why the demon is not under control anymore!"

The people were listening attentively despite in a situation like this. After all, they had been wanting to hear one word coming from the Holy Knight Captain that had been leading them this whole time.

"The Saintess has defeated the demon leader! That's right. This is our VICTORY!" The Holy Knight Captain shouted at the top of his lungs.

"Uooooohhhh!" The soldiers let out a huge cry, startling everyone in the city. They didn't know why the soldiers were screaming uncontrollably.

"Listen up! The Saintess will soon return to the city. This is the time to show our might! Kill the rest of the demons!"

"Uooooohhhh!" The spirited soldiers became even more ferocious. They knew that the demon leader had been defeated, so the only thing they had to do was to kill the rest of the demons that attacked their city.

Unlike the previous situation where they couldn't see any hope due to the continuous supply of demons, they could finally see hope. If they could defeat all these demons like how they did it in the past few weeks, they would be able to save the city.

Their spirit was at its peak. Even if they were tired, they knew what they did in the next few hours wouldn't be a waste.

"Attack!" The soldiers shouted as they showed a might that no one had ever seen before. They looked like a ferocious soldier that had gone through a hundred battles.

One of the people in the city asked the soldier who just climbed down the stairs to inform the people. "Sir Soldier. Is there something wrong?"

"The Saintess has defeated the demon leader. More than half of them have returned to the forest, so we can defeat the rest of the demons and finally save the city. The Saintess will surely return here not long after!"

When the people heard those words, some of them couldn't help but tear up. They had been suffering for the last few weeks. Their morales were very low. And now, the hope appeared.

"I'm glad... I'm glad I can survive."

"Uoh..."

Some fell down to the ground, some cheered. Nonetheless, all of them were happy.

"Please help us to spread the news. Just a few more hours! Just a few more hours we can eliminate all the demons!"

From that point on, the city was brimming with cheers. Even though the threat had yet to completely disappear, the festive mood had filled the city.

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Meanwhile, the real hero that saved the city was none other than Noel.

Noel took a deep breath after confirming the death of the Undying Mushroom Demon. This might truly be the hardest mission he had gone so far.

All of his previous missions were quite easy because the demons were something that he could handle by himself. But an Advanced Level Demon was different. If he wasn't careful or the battlefield wasn't perfect, he would have died.

Still, it didn't change the fact that he managed to kill an Advanced Level Demon.

He then turned around, knowing that the Saintess had come to help him. And the one who would probably bring the Saintess was Anna.

As expected, he saw them standing on top of the tree. Since the situation was already safe, the Saintess formed a few small barriers that acted like stairs, allowing her to go down.

She walked to Noel while clenching her hands. She lowered her head to Noel and said, "Thank you... Thank you. Thank you for saving the city. I'm glad that the people are now safe."

Noel could feel her gratitude by the fact she said "Thank you" three times alone. However, Noel maintained his serious face and stopped the gratitude. "Don't thank us yet. We haven't completely solved the problem."

Chapter 163 Kindness?

"Don't thank us yet?" Anna muttered in a low voice. She couldn't help but notice the word 'us' from Noel's mouth. It was clear that Noel was the biggest contribution of this battle. In fact, he single-handedly killed the demon leader. Yet, Noel considered her as well and never took the credit for himself.

This was something not everyone could do. Even she wondered what she would do when she was in his position. She would think that she deserved it because she had done it by herself.

'Looking at this, Noel should have a way to defeat the Ancient Demon Tree. But I used the opportunity to take something away from him. If I didn't help him, he would have defeated the tree alone and got more rewards.

'Because I reincarnated, I could utilize the memory of my past life to get more chances and become even stronger than my past self. Yet, I never thought about this...' Her heart thumped as she looked at Noel. 'What if I take someone's chance and as a result, they die because of me? Have I even considered the

effect when I take someone's chance? They're strangers for sure, but... looking at Noel who can give me the credit without hesitation...'

She felt being ashamed. Unlike Noel's system that granted him something from somewhere else, Anna took something from others by using their chance. Before, she thought about giving something else to Noel from her own opportunity, but there were some chances that she took from others. She just never considered her actions because she didn't know them personally.

'For example, what if I got the artifact that someone should have in the future to save the people in needs? But because I took it, that someone couldn't save those people and die?'

Anna looked down, wondering if her choice was alright. She could be selfish too, but she hesitated after seeing Noel.

Noel didn't know about the dilemma in her heart. He only glanced at her before turning back to the Saintess. "We have two more problems. The first is the demons outside the city. I'm pretty sure that the demons won't return just like that since they move based on instinct. We have to kill the demons."

"I agree. I'll tell the Holy Knights to eliminate them." The Saintess nodded in agreement.

"No. We'll be the ones defeating the demons."

"Huh?"

"Your Holy Knights have another job to do. I said it earlier, right? We have two more problems. Even if we can save them, we still have one big problem. What is it?"

"!!!" The Saintess almost forgot about it. "Water supply! That's right. The water supply has been stopped by those demons. Even if we can save the city, it'll be for naught if we can't solve the water supply."

"That's right. I want your Holy Knights to handle the water supply. I'm pretty sure they're creating some sort of structures to stop the water supply. The Holy Knights have to destroy it and bring the people to fix the water supply problem."

The Saintess agreed with his opinion. The Moon Temple job was to solve the city's problem. The demons were an outside problem while the water supply was a problem from the inside. The Holy Knights Job should be the latter, not the former. It was the duty of the Demon Banner Army to exterminate the demons.

"My apology! I don't mean to look down on you, O' Knights of the Demon Banner Army." The Saintess lowered her head again.

"No problem. I know that you're desperate to help people. I can understand that. But let's do what we're supposed to do." Noel smiled. "Of course, the Holy Knights in the people's eyes are the heroes of the city. That's why I'll ask you to accompany us in exterminating the demon. This way, the Saintess will be the one saving the city from the demons. After that, the Holy Knights will return to fix the water problem."

"But..." The Saintess furrowed her eyebrows. "If you do it like this, won't the people only think of us, not you?"

"As I said, we're simply doing what we're supposed to do. Exterminating the demon is the job of the Demon Banner Army, but becoming the savior is for the Moon Temple."

The Saintess was shocked. She never met someone as kind as him. Even though he could become a hero in those people's eyes and raise his reputation in order to rebuild his ruined family, he chose to give that credit to someone else. This was truly unexpected. How could one be so kind?

Though, it was just her misunderstanding Noel's kindness.

Noel was thinking something else in his head. 'Of course, you will take the credit. I'm not gonna do it because the higher my reputation is, the more the Royal Family will keep me in check. If my reputation increase that much in short amount of time, I'm afraid the Royal Family will send an assassin to thoroughly eliminate me. So, you should take the credit.

'And with Anna taking the credit, the people will think that everything is due to her talent and strength, not me. I'm simply saving myself here.'

As Noel thought, he didn't have any relation or power to resist the problems if he became too big for the Royal Family. Even the commander wouldn't dare to offend the Royal Family just for an Apprentice Knight. So, without power and background, he couldn't do anything.

For now, his plan was to help people as much as possible. Whether they gave him anything or not in the future, he had instilled his existence to those people. Bit by bit, he was building his own reputation. The pace, too, wasn't that fast to the point it would reach the Royal Family's ears.

Still, the Saintess was different. She could only see Noel's kindness and moved by it.

Clasping her hand as if she was praying, she came closer to Noel while saying, "O' Goddess of the Moon. I have found a soul, kinder than anyone else. Please bless him with your grace so that he can help more people."

The Saintess gently placed her hands on Noel's cheeks before she slightly lowered his head so that she could give a kiss on his forehead.

Chapter 164 Moon Goddess

"Eh?" Anna was dumbfounded, watching the Saintess kiss Noel's forehead out of nowhere. There was a weird feeling that crept into her heart, but she believed it was due to the sudden action.

And that feeling soon disappeared when golden light gradually covered his body.

"This is..." Anna realized that the Saintess had to do it in order to give him the blessing. She could also see that Noel stopped moving and even closed his eyes as if he received something.

After that, the Saintess smiled and confirmed that he'd gotten what he deserved. Only then did she turn around and walk to Anna.

"Saintess." Anna politely lowered her head as if she knew she would be receiving the blessing too.

However, Layla stopped her and took her hands.

"Thank you for helping me and the city. If you are not here, I might not be standing here alive. Please close your eyes."

Anna closed her eyes, preparing to receive the same thing as Noel. But she was shocked when Layla suddenly touched both her eyelids.

A surge of Spiritual Energy entered her eyes. But she never expected that the treatment was different from Noel.

While she was receiving the Moon Blessing, Anna muttered inwardly, 'Huh? What's wrong with her? Why did she kiss Noel's forehead and the only thing she did to me was touching my eyelids? What's with the different treatment? Does she hate me or does she like Noel?'

Anna felt uncomfortable because of the difference in treatment, not knowing whether this thought came simply from the different treatment or not.

She could only remain silent for this whole process that didn't even take too long to complete. It appeared Noel had received a separate reward.

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While Layla gave the Moon Blessing to Anna, Noel's consciousness had gone to somewhere else.

He could feel a chilling night breeze, but the cold didn't penetrate his skin. The warm light gradually illuminated this darkness, revealing the true form of this place.

"This is..." Noel was stunned because he saw something like this for the first time. He was in the middle of a flower garden. There were numerous flowers around him from white to black. All of them grew beautifully.

There were fireflies roaming around to brighten the garden.

"Where is this?" Noel looked around, wondering what he had to do in this place. But when he turned around, he saw a huge flower that could devour him easily.

And on top of that flower sat a woman with unprecedented beauty. She had long black hair tied into a ponytail and crystal clear skin that could reflect the moonlight, making her look ethereal. Even Noel never saw a woman this beautiful.

However, what shocked him the most was a pair of butterfly wings attached to her back.

With how the moonlight seemed to illuminate her brighter than anyone else as if showing its differential treatment, Noel couldn't help but mutter her title. "Moon Goddess."

A smile appeared on her face as her closed eyes gradually opened, revealing a pair of beautiful purple eyes.

"Welcome to my garden, child."

Noel never thought he would be able to see a Goddess with his own eyes.

"I'm sure that you're confused as to why I brought you here." She waved her hand as if asking him to come.

Noel gulped down and hesitated a bit, but still walked to the Moon Goddess.

No words came into his mind despite him having so many questions in his heart. He wanted to ask her many things about the spirits, but his mind felt frozen as if preventing all those questions to appear.

"Thank you for helping my children, especially this little kid." She raised her finger and projected an image of Layla.

"I... I'm simply doing my job for a reward. I don't deserve your thanks." Noel shook his head, not daring to take advantage of a Goddess' kindness. He felt that she could see through his heart, so there was no meaning to lie to her.

"You did it for my blessing. Of course, I know. I also know that your desire and the reason for you to not taking the credit for yourself."

Gasp! Noel's body twitched because the Goddess before him could deem his thought to be treacherous to the Saintess, so she wondered what he should do.

"Worry not for I won't get involved too much in human's matter just like all spirits."

"Huh? All spirits? You..." Noel had this doubt as soon as he saw those butterfly wings, but he never thought that the Moon Goddess actually revealed it herself.

"I am also a spirit, precisely the Dark Butterfly Spirit. But you can say that I'm stronger than those spirits. Well, let's not talk about me because the reason I call you here is to mention something about your spirits."

,m "My Spirits?" Noel had expected this ever since the Saintess revealed her ability to see the two spirits in his body, but it was still surprising that the Moon Goddess was bringing the topic itself.

"Yes. Aside from their name, you should know about the type of their Spirit. Your Heisk is an Ice Fairy Spirit as for your sword..." She paused a bit, showing the importance of Ardagan's identity as well as raising the tension. "Ardagan is the Pure Sword Spirit. He wasn't born but created by a Pure Fire, a fire that is so pure that it can burn everything to nothing. He receives its trait a little bit and call it Undying Fire."

"The Pure Sword Spirit?" Noel was confused by the meaning of its name. In the past, the spirits had given their own names but the humans never considered the spirit type important. "Pure Sword Spirit, Ice Fairy Spirit, Dark Butterfly Spirit... Do these name have something that differentiate them? Ah, I apologize if I sound rude by adding your name into it."

Noel hurriedly lowered his head to apologize. He wanted to find another example of spirits to make the question more fluid, but he only knew about the Dark Butterfly Spirit, so he ended up adding her name into it.

Instead of getting angry, the Moon Goddess was actually smiling.

Chapter 165 Different Answer

"There is a meaning of the names. But that will be your task to discover the difference. Are the spirits living in everyone's body? Why do people have to awaken them first? People have worked hard for their entire life but still can't awaken them? Does true goal really the condition of the spirit awakening? There are many questions you can discover.

"Unfortunately I can't give you the answer. It's not because I don't want to give it to you, but I wish you can discover them yourself. There is a merchant selling an item for two silver coins and a customer is willing to buy it. How many copper coins does he has to give the merchant?"

"Huh? This question..." Noel tilted his head in confusion, not understanding why she asked this simple question. He answered without hesitation, "200 copper coins."

"It might be right, it might be wrong." She made a playful smile.

"It might be right, it might be wrong?" Noel repeated it as he was thoroughly confused.

"That's right. I can say that the customer is paying 201 copper coins? Why? Because the customer likes to give a tip. The answer can even come in the form of gold coin even though the question is about the copper coins. Why is that?

"It's because you don't know what kind of buyer is coming to the merchant. This buyer has their knowledge, experience, and character just like you. That's why the answer you will achieve when discovering the spirits might be different from the one I'll give you. It can be wrong, it can be right. Or you might be wrong now, but there's someone in the future that will prove your opinion is correct.

"That's why I want you to discover the answer yourself. Ardagan will give you some hints here and there based on his own knowledge, but he won't tell you everything. It's up to your interpretation."

Noel closed his eyes for a moment. He could feel the wisdom from her explanation alone. It was clear that she could give her all the answers he wanted.

But she herself actually doubted her own understanding. She thought she was right, but others might think she was wrong. She might discuss it with others and a new idea would be born.

She approached things differentially so that she could find something new. It was no wonder that she was a Goddess.

"Are you disappointed that you don't get the answer from me?" She smiled.

"I'll be lying if I said I'm not disappointed. However, I can't say that I'm excited to see my own answers. If you guide me with your answer, my mind will always think what I know is correct because it's directly coming from you.

"But I'm just a human. Even the knowledge we have all around the world comes from the culmination of experiments to discover the truth itself. I have my own goal, but I can say that this aligns with my goal. So, I don't really mind finding the truth myself. You even guarantee that Ardagan will give me some hints here and there.

"That's why I might not find the correct answer in my lifetime, but I believe that the answer I have discovered myself is the correct one." He smiled back, showing his determination.

"You are a good child."

Still, Noel had one doubt in his heart. The Moon Temple had been trying to help people, so he thought that the Moon Goddess would be stopping him from avenging his parents. But she never mentioned anything about it.

As if she could see through his mind, the Moon Goddess added, "I'll never stop anyone from avenging someone. It's your choice and decision and that's not something I'll interfere. However, I do have to warn you about one thing.

"It's just two words that you might question yourself often. 'Now what?' These are the two words. After revenge, you might probably ask this question. I'm sure it's different when you know about your real goal, right?"

"Ah!" Noel widened his eyes, feeling enlightened. It was true that he would feel empty since revenge would be over after he killed those people. He didn't know what to do for the rest of his life. However, his goal was different. It would keep driving him to the end of his life as if it was...

The Goddess smiled and finished his thought. "Live to your own belief. Just make sure that before you pass away in the far future, you will be able to think, 'I've lived my life and I don't regret for living that way,' alright?"

"Yes. Thank you for your wisdom, Goddess." Noel lowered his head, thanking her.

"Good child. In that case, thanks to your effort, I'll give you one hint. Give that ice pearl to Heisk." As soon as she finished her words, she snapped her fingers and Noel's consciousness became fuzzy.

"Huh?" Noel could hear her hint clearly, but he didn't have enough time to ask the reason. But before his consciousness faded completely, he could see Ardagan's notifications.

[Mission: Help the Saintess of the Moon Temple in Argali Town (Complete)]

[Description: The Saintess will soon be corrupted. Go and save her within 75 days.]

[Reward: Moon Blessing and 21 SP]

[Penalty: Regret.]

[Receiving the Moon Goddess Blessing.]

[Your eyes now can see the dark.]

[Receiving 21 SP.]

This was the first time he saw the notification to appear directly because of someone else. It was clear that the Moon Goddess' action was the one causing it, proving the connection between her and Ardagan. But there was no way he would get the answer.

"Haaa..." Noel let out a sigh before realizing that he had returned to reality, finding Anna and Layla waiting for him. "Ehm..."

"You have been standing like that for fifteen minutes," Anna said without hesitation, answering his doubt. "It seems that you get something special. I'm jealous."

"Something special? I'm just like you... I only received the blessing." Noel shrugged while looking at Anna. Contrary to his poker face, Noel became even more determined about his revenge. Even the Moon Goddess didn't stop him, so he had no reason to stop it.

Chapter 166 Reward (1)

"Chain Bind Rune."

"Sword Fall."

"Sword D'Dantalian."

Anna and Noel were moving around the walls, making sure to kill every single demon that threatened the city. Fortunately, there were around four hundred demons that besieged the city earlier, but due to the continuous effort of the soldiers as well as the removal of the demon leader, there were only a bit more than one hundred demons remaining.

Noel and Anna easily swept them away. The only hard part was to move around the city wall, considering the city was quite massive.

They ended up using a few hours to kill these demons. Fortunately, Noel and Anna had been running a lot for their training, including the fact that they traveled to another place by foot. Their stamina looked endless to the point they covered the whole city without exhausting themselves.

Even the Saintess ended up retiring due to the lack of stamina. Of course, Noel simply asked her to enter the city to calm the citizens. After they finished all the demons, Layla could properly handle the citizens so that they knew what to do.

As expected, the Holy Knights that they sent separately to take care of the water supply had returned. According to the instruction, they should have eliminated all the demons in the area and the Saintess would take care of the people that would fetch the water.

After a continuous effort from Anna and Noel, they finally freed the city. However, the people were too busy to think about their water supply to the point a huge number of people were running out of the city to bring back some water.

It might be the first time for a city to actually help each other out to relieve themselves from this crisis.

Meanwhile, Noel and Anna took some rest in the Saintess' house because they had worked too hard during this relief.

"So, it seems that we have finished the jobs." Anna smiled, feeling relieved.

"Yeah." Noel confirmed.

"Our Group Mission was to kill the demons that surrounded this city, so I guess we'll be able to receive the proof of our completion now from the Earl."

"You handle that, I'm not going to bother myself with the Earl. It's better for another noble to meet another noble. It's not the place for a Fallen Noble like me." Noel shrugged while looking away.

"You..." Anna wanted to rebuke him, but she couldn't. She was a part of the reason why Noel became a fallen noble, so it was clear that he said this just to spite on her.

Noel shrugged. "Whatever. I'm tired, so I'm going to retire first." Noel shrugged as he immediately went to a room designated for him. Anna also had one, but she could only watch Noel leaving.

'Why does he seem to be colder than usual? This is weird. Although his action didn't show it in the past few months, Noel should still have some hatred to me. Yet, he actually openly showed it this time as if something changed within him.' Anna thought, wondering what happened to Noel.

She didn't know that Noel had sorted a bit of his emotion and feeling after meeting the Moon Goddess.

Although he wouldn't show it most of the time, he had to do it now and then to make sure that he didn't become too close to Anna to the point he forgot about his revenge.

He couldn't help but remember the moment where he considered Anna's confession seriously. If it was him from the past, he would deny it without hesitation. It was clear that Anna had changed a part of him, so if he continued to act that way, Anna might be able to completely change his heart sooner or later. Hence, a bit of coldness was necessary.

Of course, Noel also had another reason for retiring this early. He might be exhausted, but it wasn't enough to make him rest.

He simply wanted to check his system entirely, considering they had just finished the mission.

There were three huge gains in this mission. The first one would be the Moon Blessing.

Due to this blessing, he had the ability to see in the dark. Hence, Noel immediately moved to his bed and tried to check under the bed since the light couldn't reach the spot.

After that, he channeled a bit of Spiritual Energy into his eyes and the darkness soon dissipated as if the light illuminated it.

"So, this is Moon Blessing. It doesn't require too much Spiritual Energy and it's quite useful to fight during a complete darkness such as caves. We don't need a torch that can give away our location. As for during the night, well, it's quite useful as well since we have a longer vision range.

"The Ancient Ruin is going to come soon, so the Moon Blessing will show its might there. I'm waiting for the time I truly use this power." Noel nodded, satisfied.

Then, he immediately moved to the second gain.

Skill Points: 21 Pts

He had received 21 Skill Points from the mission. There were several things he could upgrade, but what made him curious was actually the Undying Fire that Ardagan showed him earlier.

After learning more about Ardagan from the Moon Goddess, it was clear that Ardagan's existence wasn't ordinary. He was a Spirit that was artificially created. If he compared the Freezing Crystal and the Ignition Sword, the explosion was actually more dangerous despite using less SP to learn. That was why it was clear that Ardagan's ability far surpassed that of a Demi-human Spirit. Ardagan might be equal or even higher than the Humanoid Spirit.

Hence, he had a great hope for this Undying Fire.

Although he was hesitated a bit, he still put 20 Skill Points to learn the Undying Fire. All the information was immediately transferred into his mind.

But he soon sucked a cold breath because the information was far beyond his imagination.

"This is..." Noel covered his mouth in shock, sorting the information right away to get a clear image.

"Such a strong fire..."

Chapter 167 Reward (2)

"Such a strong fire. The Undying Fire has five stages. The first stage is the natural awakening of the Undying Fire. It'll have the ability to burn my own body in a good way such as fat and other stuff that will weaken me. With this, I can expect that the fire will improve my physical ability by at least ten percent. This alone is enough to make a great improvement since its effect far surpasses all the training I have done.

"That's why Ardagan offered this option when I wanted to remove the spore from my body. It believed that the spore was something that would weaken my body. In other words, poison and the like wouldn't be able to affect my body as well. I don't know to what extent, but the fact that I get some poison resistance or even immunity is very good. I don't need to fear assassination attempt or adventure related to poison.

"I don't know about the second stage, but the fact that this fire has such powerful ability from the first stage alone is enough to make me anticipate the next four stages." Noel smirked excitedly.

However, the Undying Fire didn't come without a weakness. There was one big weakness that Noel couldn't see.

Skill: Undying Fire (1/5)

Requirement: 100 SP

"..." Noel's eyebrows twitched. "Seriously? 100 Skill Points for stage two? It's simply too abnormal. Ah, that's right. I have helped many people once again. Back then, the system recognize my effort by stacking the help that I give in the form of water and the one related to the dam.

"Since I have relieved them with water and the demon, I should get a quite amount." Noel immediately checked his Honor Points, only to be disappointed by the result.

Honor Points:

"What is this number? There are more than four thousand people in this city and this time, I don't use two Honor Points to get three Honor Points every one hundred people. So, I should be able to get a full three Honor Points per one hundred people.

"Yet, I only get less than half? 60 Honor Points only? Really? Are you kidding me?" Noel complained for the first time. The result was far from what he expected after all.

He thought he would be able to get more than one hundred twenty Honor Points but they didn't even get half of it. So, he questioned Ardagan about the result, only to find that he didn't save all of them. No, specifically, Ardagan explained to him that it was a joint effort this time.

Unlike the previous time where he involved the others but was still the only one to complete the mission, this time, he had tasked other people like the Holy Knights fighting the demons so that they could focus on the Advanced Level Demon or the Holy Knights taking care of the water supply.

Because he delegated such stuff, his completion rate became lower, making him receive less Honor Points because he didn't save them by himself.

Noel was dumbfounded when he knew about the reason. He couldn't help but recall all the previous helps he had given to others.

Even in the dam mission, he realized that he was the only one taking down the demons while the villagers only helped him carrying the water. That was why he always received the full amount.

This time was different, the Holy Knight was directly involved in helping.

Noel learned that he had to complete the mission by himself if he wanted to progress the mission. Delegating someone a task that would make them directly participate in the completion meant he needed to receive less amount.

Still, considering he had to split the reward with many people, Noel was still given the reward as the biggest contribution by saving 45 out of 100 people.

"So, I can't delegate task to others if I don't want my rewards to be split. But then again, if I delegate more people, I can save more. Depending on the case, splitting the jobs can give me more reward since I can't do everything by myself." Noel was in dilemma.

On the one hand, he wanted to monopolize the point to get the highest reward. On the other hand, he wondered if he didn't delegate others to do their job like the Holy Knights, could he actually save those people easily?

If he refused to do it simply because he wanted to get everything, the people might realize and end up scorning him instead of thanking him. When that happens, the count of helping people might not increase at all.

That was why Noel had to carefully plan his move next time.

"I guess paying around sixty Honor Points for this lesson is worth it. At the very least, I haven't reached the point where I save more than ten thousand people or even more." Noel nodded in understanding. "With this, I know what to do. In any case, I still have 64 Honor Points and 1 Skill Point that I can use.

"Because I'm going back to the fort to wait for Rick and Rica to bring me the finished armor, I'll save the Honor Points right now. After all, I'm going to the place my father visited every year as soon as I receive the armor before heading to the ruin."

Noel didn't want to drown in his mistake, so he moved on to the next topic.

He took out the Ice Pearl he got from the lake in the Demon Forest. "That's right. The Moon Goddess said to give this pearl to Heisk. And the only way to do it is to..."

He put the Ice Pearl on Heisk's Spirit Seal. Soon, the Spirit Seal glowed as if reacting to this item. The Spiritual Energy from the Pearl was sucked by Heisk as if she was drinking a delicious wine.

"This is..." Noel was also shocked because he found out something.

Skill: Water Purifying (1/3)

Requirement: 10 SP

Skill: Temperature Control (1/3)

Requirement: 10 SP

"I got more skills? But no one was supposed to receive a skill like this since they don't have a system like Ardagan... What will happen to the normal people when they do this?" Noel furrowed his eyebrows because he wanted to find the answer like the Moon Goddess said. But he never thought that he would realize something that changed his perspective forever. "Wait a minute. Is there a possibility that a Spirit can evolve to a higher rank if we continue feeding them what they can absorb?"

Chapter 168 Thoughts

It was a surprising conclusion even for Noel. He thought that if the Spirits could give people more power, it also meant that there was a chance to improve.

"Now that I think about it, there are a few records that one's talent has become even higher due to the sudden awakening. The record name it Second Awakening. It's said that the absorption rate is increased.

"But the first three ranks are Normal Spirit, Superior Spirit, and Beastly Spirit. They might not look that different, I guess?"

Noel had a few theories in his mind, but none of them could be proven without any research. In the end, he abandoned this thought for a while so that he could focus on the matter in hands.

"I have now gotten so many Spirit Abilities. The Water Purifying thing is good. Maybe I can use it in the future as a replacement of the water from Ardagan. As for the Temperature Control... I'm not sure about this skill. It's not that powerful, considering the Spirit Ability doesn't allow me to freeze my enemy. For now, it can control the temperature of my body, so it's quite useful when I'm injured or something. When I lose a lot of blood, I bound to have a fever. Or when I travel, I can use this to withstand the heat."

Noel nodded in agreement. There were many things he could get from these Spirit Abilities. Still, the reward was bountiful this time. He didn't expect to get so much from one mission.

"Anyway, Anna will take the proof of completion and we'll then go back to the fort so that I can receive the armor. After that, I'll go straight to the neighboring kingdom. Since I'm a fallen noble, there's no need to send the letter anyway."

As soon as he decided his course for the next month, Noel immediately tried the Spirit Ability he'd got earlier.

As expected, the Temperature Control wasn't that powerful. It could affect the water temperature like the pearl, but it didn't do much in terms of offensive power. As for the Water Purifying Ability, the effect was the same. It could purify poison and other things inside the water.

Any assassination attempts wouldn't work this way since he could easily use this Spirit Ability instead of using the Ice Pearl to do it. The Spirit Ability made it more convenient.

And last but not least, the Undying Fire.

Noel summoned the Undying Fire on top of his palm. The black flame wasn't that aggressive since its power focused on his body. Even if the Water Purifying ability didn't work, all the poison in his body would be burned by this Undying Fire.

Right now, it might not have any offensive ability, but if he upgraded it to the second level, the Undying Fire would evolve and become even greater.

"That's right. There is a record of my ancestor. Since we're wielding the same sword, the ability is the same. My Ancestor's Undying Fire is said to be able to completely erase an Ancient Level Demon to nothing. As expected of the strongest expert in the world at that time.

"But then again, if my ancestor is that strong, why does he seal Ardagan? He said to only wield Ardagan when we're in peril... If he's that strong, why does he not make his son or grandson to inherit this sword? This is weird, very weird.

"Does the ancestor know something about the sword? The secret of the sword, spirits, and the demons?" Noel had many questions in his mind.

On the one hand, he was curious about the ancestor. On the other hand, it wasn't something he could find easily.

"So, is there any record about my ancestor? There should be one in my previous house, but it's been sealed by the royal family. I don't know the condition of the book too.

"Is there any way I can buy that property again? But that requires me a lot of money. I guess I should buy that mansion again with my second identity. After all, Noel Ardagan has to die after one year."

Due to the Saintess, he had been thinking a lot of things. Layla only mentioned about her suspicion, but it was clear that it had been weighing Noel's mind a lot.

Noel couldn't help but scratch the back of his head. "I should take a nap to reset my mind."

Not wanting to continuously ask the questions that he couldn't answer, Noel decided to take a nap.

Meanwhile, Anna was heading straight to the mansion where the Earl was located.

She was greeted happily by the Earl himself due to Anna's contribution.

Earl Hawkins was a middle-aged man with long black hair, tied neatly on his back. He had thin body, so it was clear he couldn't participate in the battle himself.

"Isn't this miss Anna Stargaze, the most talented person in our kingdom? It's my honor to be graced by your presence. I thank you for your help in relieving the disaster." Earl Hawkins politely bowed his head to greet and thank Anna for her hard work.

'In the Axaomor Kingdom, the nobility system consists of Duke, Marquis, Earl, Count and Baron. My status as the most talented person in the kingdom as well as the daughter of a marquis allows me to speak blatantly to an Earl.

'Well, due to my status, there are so many people wanting to marry me too, but I shut them up with my talent. This Earl's son should be one of my pursuers, but with this, I can make sure he doesn't go to me anymore.

'But then again, the one who did the most was Noel. I don't know if I should receive all this gratitude.' Anna contemplated for a moment. On the one hand, her words alone was enough to destroy the Count Ardagan. On the other hand, if she let Noel get all the credits, it would be contradicting to what she had built so far.

Her father might know about her change of heart. If he knew that she didn't want to kill Noel but instead help him, Marquis Stargaze might send an assassin to kill Noel personally. She was in dilemma because she didn't want Noel to die.

After some contemplation, Anna politely nodded. "No, it's fine. I'm simply completing my mission from the Demon Banner Army."

Chapter 169 Scam

Anna processed the formality to get the proof of completion. Since she made an excuse that she hadn't slept for a whole day, she managed to get away from the Earl.

The Earl offered her a room in the mansion since she didn't have to suffer in a bad bed any commoner had, but he backed down after knowing Anna living in the Saintess' house.

In the end, Anna managed to finish the entire process within thirty minutes instead of hours.

'As expected, talking to a noble is tiring.' Anna let out a long sigh. 'If I was my past self, I would talk to them rudely since I thought of them as someone beneath me. But now, I have to force a smile when I'm talking to them... it's tiring.'

"She is..."

"She is Anna Stargaze!"

The citizens that had been trying to restore the life to this city recognized Anna walking down the street. She was on her way back to Layla's house, but it seemed she wouldn't have any peace here.

"Thank you!"

"Uoohhhh!"

The people in the street cheered. Some even kneeled to give their thanks to Anna. As expected of the most talented person in the kingdom, her fame had spread around the kingdom, especially this area since the Earl's son was her pursuer.

Everyone sang a praise to her because she had helped them from the disaster.

"Thank you, Miss Anna Stargaze."

"As expected of the most talented person in the kingdom."

"Uooh!"

The cheers kept erupting. Anna could see their joyous face as if they thanked her wholeheartedly.

It couldn't help but put a smile on her face. This was what Noel had felt this whole time when he helped the people and received their gratitude.

'It's no wonder that Noel helped people in the past. To think I'll be able to feel this happy... When we're a noble, people will thank us because we're doing our job. But right now, we're a soldier from the Demon Banner Army, we have no obligation to help them. That's why in their eyes, the fact that we're helping them means we're good people. Their gratitude is so genuine.'

Anna could understand the difference between a noble and a commoner. Noble had their obligation called Noblesse Oblige. But it was different if she came as something else.

'It seems that joining the Demon Banner Army is the right thing to do and meeting Noel is probably the best choice I have ever made.' Anna made a big smile while waving her hand to the people.

However, not everything was a praise. With her ability, she couldn't help but listen to those whispers as well.

"Isn't Noel Ardagan with her too?"

"That fallen noble?"

"He must haven't done anything. What can he do in front of the most talented person in the kingdom?"

"That's right."

Anna's heart was shaken when she heard those whispers. Those people didn't know that Noel gave the plan to ensure the city's supply, killed the Advanced Level Demon, and relieved the city. He did all those things.

In fact, compared to her or Layla's contribution, he was a cut above the rest. That was why if they wanted to sing a praise, it would be for Noel.

Yet, Noel didn't receive anything, but scorn from these people. And it got worse.

"That Noel should have died... To think he's trying to ride on Miss Anna Stargaze's strength for his own achievement."

"No wonder he is now a fallen noble."

"The royal family should have executed him, not exiled him."

"Miss Anna was the one asking them to kill him too, right? Does that mean she know this fallen noble is disgusting? That's why even if she can't kill him, she can put him on the leash?"

"That might be true. As expected of Miss Anna, she has a great foresight and talent."

Anna was speechless. Rage started to creep into her heart. At one point, she wanted to burst out and tell them off, but the people wouldn't believe her.

'Why? Has Noel been experiencing this in his whole life? How about his past life? Even with people despising him, he still helped these people? How strong do you have to be to do something like that?'

Anna questioned people's heart. She never thought that even if you helped them, they would talk about you behind your back. It was disgusting and painful.

If she erupted here, Noel's reputation would be smeared even further because they would think Noel had managed to influence Anna.

She clenched her fists to hold back her anger. Her smile became forced as she increased her pace, wanting to go back as soon as possible.

'Does Noel know this outcome if he comes with me to Earl Hawkins? So, this is why he is hiding in his room? I... ' Anna never thought that the burden Noel carried was this big. She just wanted to come and talk to him. If possible, he wanted to comfort him because he deserved that much. 'This is the reason why Noel gives all the credits to the Saintess. People won't believe him and his power.

'The people in the city are more knowledgeable than those in the villages. That's why Noel can only do it in those villages because they simply don't know about his identity.

'Even if no one thanks him, I should go back and thank him right now.' Anna was rushing back to the point she was ignoring the cheers from the people. Her heart wasn't happy anymore.

"Noel!" Anna shouted as soon as she reached Layla's house and immediately went to Noel's room.

However, she saw the Holy Knight Captain in front of Noel's room, handing two big bags.

"These are the Demon Crystals. There should be more than six hundred Demon Crystals with fifty of them being Mid Level Demon Crystals."

"Are you sure you don't want to take this? You need money for your operation, no?"

"The Saintess has told us personally to give everything to you. Without you, we would have died in this city and because you don't want to take any credit, we can only give you these crystals as our thanks. Please don't reject it."

"I understand. Please convey my thanks to Saintess Layla." Noel nodded.

"Yes." The Holy Knight Captain smiled and noticed Anna on the side. He made a playful smile and immediately left them alone so that they could talk.

Noel glanced to Anna and smirked. "Oh, you have returned, Anna. It must feel great to be hailed as a hero, right? I am so envious... But since you have gotten the credit as well as the praise, I'm taking everything. Thanks!"

Noel didn't hesitate to return to his room and slam the door shut, taking all the Demon Crystals by himself.

All the sadness in her heart was instantly dissipated.

'Did he know that everything would turn this way so he gave the credits to others? Everything is so that he could rip all the material benefits? Wait, if he absorbs all those Demon Crystals... Won't his Spiritual Energy be above me?' Anna panicked because she came to a realization. 'He... He scammed me?'

Chapter 170 Almost

The next day.

Noel came out of his room after absorbing all the Demon Crystals. He didn't find anyone else in the house, but he could sense the presence of Layla in her room. It seemed she was a bit exhausted after helping the people.

He then walked to the outside, wanting to get some fresh air, only to find Anna who was covered with sweats.

"Ha... Ha..." Anna panted a few times as if she had gone through a very hard practice.

"Yo, it seems that you have been practicing for a whole day?" Noel made a smug smile.

Anna's eyebrows twitched. She wouldn't be practicing like this if he didn't scam her. "Whose fault do you think I'm working this hard?"

"Who knows?" Noel shrugged.

"I really want to hit your face right now."

"Then, do it." Noel smiled and dropped his guard as if allowing Anna to punch him.

Anna was truly pissed. She knew what Noel was thinking. If she hit him here, he would have gotten another reason to kill her. Hence, it was better to drown Noel with guilt so that he couldn't kill her.

"How about sparring with me?" Noel smirked as if giving the chance to hit him. Since Noel was the one asking for the sparring, he couldn't hold a grudge with this. No matter how petty Noel was, he wouldn't be this petty.

But Noel's mind was different. He thoroughly believed that with the current situation of his Spiritual Energy, he would be able to defeat Anna. As long as he could keep Anna at bay for a long time, he could defeat her.

After all, he had absorbed so many Demon Crystals. He had even checked his status earlier.

Name: Noel Ardagan

Low Quality Crystal - 902/5000

Mid Quality Crystal - 129/3000

Advanced Quality Crystal - 1/1500

Unfortunately, the crystals affected by the Undying Mushroom Demon didn't change to Advanced Quality Crystal, so he could only lament that fact.

Anna clicked her tongue and placed her hand on Noel's shoulder before releasing all her Spiritual Energy.

"Huh?" Noel widened his eyes in shock. "This is..."

He realized something within this power. The Spiritual Energy she had might not be lower than him at all.

"Don't forget this, Noel. Do you think I've been using all of my power this whole time? I have never exhausted my Spiritual Energy unlike you." Anna snorted and walked away as if she managed to scare him.

'That amount of Spiritual Energy...' Noel was stunned, looking at Anna's back. The more the Spiritual Energy you had, the stronger your release. That was why Noel could roughly feel the amount of Demon Crystals she had absorbed.

It was truly above him. He never expected that Anna still had this kind of trump card. Anna might beat him black and blue with that kind of power.

'How strong is she right now? Now that I think about it, Anna seems to have knowledge and abilities that I can't measure up. So, the only thing she needs is the Spiritual Energy. Don't tell me, she has been absorbing the Demon Crystals this whole time? Did she use her family power or money to buy the Demon Crystals too? If that's the case, does she have a weakness?'

Noel squinted his eyes, never expecting Anna to be this powerful.

Meanwhile, Anna who had returned to her room was leaning on the door. She felt tired to match with Noel and even panicked a bit.

'That was dangerous.' Anna gulped down while recounting the scene where she showed a high amount of Spiritual Energy. 'Spiritual Energy Release... A forbidden technique that burns your own blood to release more Spiritual Energy from your body. To think I have to use a Forbidden Technique just to escape from Noel.

'If only he didn't scam me... my Spiritual Energy would still be above him. With the knowledge of my past life, I have a good Martial Ability as well as necessary knowledge to improve, so what I'm lacking in this life is Spiritual Energy and the body to keep up with my progress.

'I have been using all my time to enhance my body, but it seems that I have to seriously go all out to increase my Spiritual Energy. Where should I get the Demon Crystals? Ah, that's right. There is a cave called Demon Graveyard. There was a powerful Spirit ian in the past that seeks the most powerful way to absorb the Spiritual Energy from those crystals, but in the end, he died due to the overdose.

'There should be a lot of Demon Crystals there, so I have to go there before visiting the Sword Saint Tomb. Besides, this cave is supposed to be found by someone from the Supreme Devil Organization and given to their Supreme Devil to increase his strength drastically.

'I can fool Noel with burning my own lifespan for now, but I have to go to this place. This time, I don't need to prepare the compensation since the Supreme Devil Organization is the enemy of mankind. I can even weaken them too by taking this cave.'

Anna closed her eyes, knowing this was the best course of action.

'If that's the case, it's better if we leave as soon as possible since it might take a long time to absorb them.'

She was determined to get stronger than Noel again. Although she still had some confidence in beating him, the moment she showed any sign of weakness, Noel would keep pestering her.

After all, he would think he had surpassed her.

'With that huge gap in the past, when Noel surpass me, he would think that I won't be able to keep up with him anymore. After all, it means he is progressing far faster than me. Once surpassed, I wouldn't be able to catch up. That's why I have to get far stronger than him.'

Anna nodded with a serious expression before noticing another fact. 'Wait a minute. How did Noel absorb all those Demon Crystals? With his current Spiritual Energy, it's clear that he's absorbed it all... Even if it was me, I would take at least a few days to absorb that amount. As expected, it must be related to his secret.'