

S vs Rebirth 331

Chapter 331 Plan

Anna learned a lot about how they were thinking. No wonder people from the Demon Banner Army were highly valued. They didn't only learn about fighting techniques but also politics, economy, and other skills valued by a noble.

Of course, everything was their choice. They could focus solely on fighting or learn only political skills, not others.

This was why the stronger the team was, the more capable they were in all kinds of things.

It turned out the secret of their success was the system created by the previous commander. It allowed the knights to be able to learn anything they wanted. Just by using their Contribution Points, they could get books and tutors to improve their skills further.

She asked many things about their current skills during lunch. After all, commoners didn't have easy access to knowledge, unlike nobles.

Though, Noel kept listening to them, wondering if it could work in his territory. Giving access to the commoners to education was a good idea, yet hard to implement.

After all, commoners would have a hard time to even attending the education class due to them working on their farms all day long.

In the end, he put this thought at the back of his mind and started working on how to deal with the monsters.

"So, what are we going to do right now?" Noel asked, wondering how the Zero Squad usually dealt with this situation.

"Mhm? What do you think?" Stella asked back, wanting to test Noel.

"Well, that's what I'd like to know. I mean, how do you usually handle this situation?" Noel asked.

"Our usual strategy is simple." Paul pointed at the wall. "We use them as a bait. In other words, just lay low for the time being until the demons strike again before finding their bosses and killing them. After that, we hunt the remaining demons.

"Or we can change our tactic a bit by gathering the information about the demons and locating them. This way, we can hunt them in their own home, which is more dangerous because we don't have numbers, and no one knows how many demons reside in their place. There might even be a stronger demon that we don't know about.

"Basically, unless you trust your informant, you don't use this tactic," Paul explained. "If it's you, how do you think we should do it?"

"Mhm..." Noel thought for a moment. "Before that, even if we use the first plan, what if there are more demons in their place, and they haven't attacked yet because they want to see how we react?"

"That's where we call help from other squads. Though, we have to call any squads near our position to handle the problem as soon as possible."

Noel thought for a moment and said, "What if we let the city fend off the demons for the time being and we head to their nest to check the enemy's situation?"

"As I said, we don't know the condition of their nest."

"Ah, I forgot the fact that we've been specialized as such. In the academy, you have to do everything by yourself, so I thought you were trying to investigate the place by yourself... Well, I understand that we might have to let the Demon Observer Squad handle the investigation." Noel chuckled, waving his hand and pulling out his suggestion.

"Yeah. Unfortunately for you, we are working on our specialty. It's good to have the motivation to do everything by yourself, but can you do it better than them? All we can do is observe the place from the outside and maintain some surveillance before notifying the Demon Observer Squad." Paul nodded.

Paul and the others obviously had some experience in investigations, but their skills couldn't be compared to the knights from the Demon Observer Squads. So, it was better to let the experts handle it.

"I see. If that's the case..." Noel looked down, falling into deep thought. "Do you think it's possible for us to bait them?"

"What do you mean?" Stella got interested as well in this new idea.

"Bait them? Can you explain it further, Noel? You don't have to care about experience or anything. We can accept new ideas as long as it's feasible in our mind." Paul asked with a serious expression. As a leader, he never suppressed his people. Instead, he encouraged them to give more to the teams, allowing them to develop themselves in this group.

So, Noel began explaining his thoughts. "The wall is tall and wide, so it's perfect for covering our movement. And because there is no ditch, the demons will be trying to climb the walls.

"Hence, I suggest we try to bait them to follow us from two opposite sides. We'll be moving toward the same location, allowing the demons to crash into each other. This way, we'll be able to attack the defenseless demons and kill many of them at once."

"Letting them crash into each other, huh... That's true. Most of them will be Low Level and Mid Level Demons whose intelligence aren't that good yet. They can be baited like this." Paul nodded with a serious expression, understanding the concept behind the plan.

"Wait, Noel. Isn't this what we've done before?" Anna was surprised that Noel planned to do the same thing as back then. The number of demons that would be chasing after them wasn't as low as back then, so escaping from them would be an arduous task.

Paul glanced at Anna for a moment before giving him two problems. "First of all, there is a chance that the Advanced Level Demons or even the Peak Level Demons will stop them before they crash. Secondly, we need people to escape from that crash, so someone with high speed like Zion."

These two problems could easily be seen through by anyone in the group. But there was a smirk on Noel's face as if he had predicted it and even prepared the answers.

"Hehe, this is my idea." With a smirk on his face, Noel asked them to get closer as he whispered about his plan.

Chapter 332 Sync

Unfortunately, no demons attacked that day, so the group just hid inside the forest not far from the fort. They even looked around to make sure no demons would come toward their place.

However, that peace soon came to an end when they heard a series of roars coming from the opposite side of the fort.

Roar!

Roar!

Roar!

"Hmm?" Paul and Rose narrowed their eyes, standing up and looking into the distance. "Rose..."

"Yeah. This is weird. We have situated ourselves in the south of this fort. Meanwhile, the demon territory spans from the west to the north. I can somehow understand they're going from the north, but this one is slightly leaning to the northeast..." Rose nodded with a serious expression. "There should be another fort in that direction, no?"

"Yes, but we don't know if the demon is coming from that fort or just going through the gap." Paul nodded. "For now, we shall handle all these demons and go to the neighboring fort to wait for our next order."

"Got it." Rose nodded.

"Alright. It's time for you two, Noel, Jonathan."

Noel and Jonathan exchanged nods with each other. "The timing is important."

"Zion and Ben will help me distract the Peak Level Demons. Stella and Anna will provide firepower for Noel and Jonathan while Rose will maintain our communication and guide us as usual. As soon as you clear up the area, we'll take down the Peak Level Demons. The details are as discussed. Understood?"

"Yes." The group answered in unison as they began preparing their equipment for the plan.

Paul and the others hurriedly moved toward their positions before Jonathan and Noel started.

Before going, Noel saw the demons gradually looping around the fort to surround it.

"I go from there, you go from there. We'll meet on the opposite side." Noel said while pointing at their spots.

"Sounds good. Make sure you don't stumble and get overwhelmed by the demons."

"Don't worry. The people here are helping us as well, so we should be able to do it." Noel nodded.

"Then, let's go." Jonathan raised his fist.

Noel smiled and bumped his fist. "Let's go."

With that signal, the two of them came out of the woods and headed straight to the fort.

Jonathan was carrying a huge dead tree with his Telekinesis while Noel summoned three big swords above him.

"Die!" Both of them shouted, signaling each other to begin.

The tree fell on top of many demons while the Sword Fall killed five demons just by flying toward them.

Many demons realized the attacks and turned around, finding Noel and Jonathan approaching.

Roar!

Roar!

A few demons alarmed the others, asking them to turn around to stop these two.

However, Noel and Jonathan's paths began to curve, stopping not far from the demons and running around the wall.

The demons that chased after them gradually increased.

Noel furrowed his eyebrows because he saw a few Mid Level Demons and one Advanced Level Demon not far from him and they seemed to be planning to chase after him as well.

Knowing the situation wouldn't be good, Rose gave him the illusion of her voice ringing in his ears.

"Go straight. Stella is ready for you!"

Noel didn't respond to it, but his hesitation disappeared. This was how Rose communicated with the others on a battlefield and it was truly helpful.

He charged straight toward those demons while waving his sword.

Bouncing Spiritual Slash.

The sword strike flew forth and began to bounce from one spot to another, confusing the demons. This strike hit multiple Mid Level Demons in front of him as Noel used his speed to avoid the rest of the Mid Level Demons.

But as expected of an Advanced Level Demon, this demon managed to follow his speed and pounce on him.

Noel wasn't afraid because there was a reliable teammate that would cover him. When the demon was about to reach him, a crescent-shaped concentrated wind flew toward the demon and hit it, cracking a few bones and launching the demon to the wall.

However, the wind soon dispersed since Stella didn't want to destroy the wall.

A smile appeared on Noel's face as he began picking up speed while finding Stella and Rose in the corner of his eyes. Rose was going to position herself at a place where she could see both sides, allowing Jonathan and Noel to arrive at the exact same time.

Meanwhile, Stella easily followed his speed even though she had to cross a longer road because she was a bit far away from the fort to not be found by the demons.

As soon as he reached the corner, Noel turned around and headed to another corner while waving his sword, attacking the demons from behind. This was a good opportunity, so he wanted to kill as many demons as possible for his repeated missions.

Noel smirked and saw Rose at the other corner, saying, "Noel, slow down a bit to match Jonathan's pace."

Noel didn't reply again, but he decreased his speed for a bit until the next instruction. While waiting for Jonathan, Noel used his Sword Fall a few times to kill Mid Level Demons near the wall.

There were many demons scratching the wall and even used their Spiritual Energy to destroy it but to no avail. It seemed the runes had enhanced the sturdiness, making it impossible to be destroyed by Advanced Level Demons or lower.

So, Noel used their focus to catch them off guard and kill them.

"Match your speed right now. I'll count to three and you've to reach the corner at the same time."

Noel and Jonathan nodded their heads as they maintained their speed.

"One..."

Noel and Jonathan's hearts skipped a beat, wondering how many demons they managed to attract in a single run. It didn't look much compared to the whole army of demons, but both of them managed to bait more than one hundred demons each. So, the crash would be enormous this time.

"Two..."

Noel and Jonathan braced themselves as they were right around the corner. They could even feel each other's presence as they were ready to jump.

"Three!"

The moment Rose's voice raised in their ears, they jumped as high as possible as they reached the corner, seeing each other.

Noel and Jonathan smiled at each other as if telling each other. "Perfect."

Chapter 333 Succeed

Roar!

Roar!

The demons were screaming at each other right before the crash. However, their momentum was too fast to stop.

Some of them managed to stop, but the demons behind them didn't know anything and ended up running over them. Some demons tripped and fell, causing another to trip and fall as well.

And those that couldn't stop ended up crashing into each other.

Roar!

The demons were destroying each other. Some even got thrown into the air.

Meanwhile, Jonathan used his Telekinesis to bring Noel float in the air, looking at the crash.

"I'll start!" Jonathan pointed his palm toward the demons and pushed the air downwards, pressing the demons down.

Before Anna and Stella could attack them, Noel made his first move. He gathered all the Spiritual Energy he could muster to form a snowflake, throwing it toward the demons.

Freezing Crystal.

The moment the snowflake touched the demons, it burst out and devoured at least two-thirds of the entire army, covering them with thick ice.

Noel got the notification of killing so many demons, but he couldn't launch a second attack because Jonathan had pulled him back.

He noticed Anna and Stella had been charging their Spiritual Energy on the side. Anna's ferocious lightning was ready to be launched from the sword, while Stella's atrocious wind was ready to devour all these demons.

Although it looked like Stella poured more Spiritual Energy into her sword, Anna was the one who managed to control and make sure no Spiritual Energy leaked from it. In the end, the amount of power inside their swords was equal.

"Her control is extraordinary. There is no leak in her Spiritual Energy." Jonathan muttered while staring at Anna.

"Leaked? What do you mean?"

"I'll explain to you after we finish this battle."

Noel nodded, knowing this wasn't the right time to listen to the explanation either.

He then watched how these two attacked their enemies.

Both of them raised their swords at the same time. Upon the signal from Rose, they both slashed downwards, shooting forth their elements.

The crescent-shaped lightning ran through the ground, destroying everything underneath. When it reached the demons, the lightning obliterated their bodies, not letting anything stop it.

Meanwhile, Stella had a different application for her Spiritual Energy. The moment the crescent-shaped wind reached the first demon, it slashed the demon into two, but the impact caused the wind to split. From one wind attack to two, two to four, four to eight, Stella steadily eliminated the demons.

Because they attacked from opposite directions, Anna's lightning was about to hit Stella's wind. Surprisingly, Stella became even more excited like this to the point she controlled her wind to go straight toward the lightning.

"Huh? What is she doing?" Noel gasped, not understanding her plan. He thought Stella would continue killing the demons, but it seemed not to be the case.

"Stella's Spiritual Energy is soft and easy to control. Though, it lacks a bit of power. On the other hand, Anna's Spiritual Energy is overbearing and hard to control. It gives power, but it doesn't allow her to control it. I'll teach you about control over the Spiritual Energy after this fight. There is a lot for you to learn."

Noel nodded with a serious expression. He also learned why Stella actually made her wind hit the lightning. Due to her soft approach, the wind acted as a wall and dispersed the lightning in all directions. The more wind slashes added to the wall, the more it scattered.

Stella was matching Anna's movement to get as many kills as possible. Even as an experienced fighter in her past life, Stella's support had left nothing to be desired from Anna's perspective.

"So, this is the level of the Zero Squad," Anna muttered with a smile.

Noel shouted, "We must kill the rest of the demons, including the one near the wall. With that, we should have cleared enough space to handle the Peak Level Demons!"

They agreed to Noel's suggestion. Even Jonathan couldn't help but remember the time when Noel gave them this idea.

At that time, Paul gave him two problems.

"First of all, there is a chance that the Advanced Level Demons or even the Peak Level Demons will stop them before they crash. Secondly, we need people to escape from that crash, so someone with high speed like Zion."

"The second problem is the easiest one to fix. I'm more familiar with this plan, so I'll be the bait. As for the second person, it'll be Jonathan!"

,m "!!!" Paul instantly understood what he wanted with Jonathan. "I see. You're planning to fly in the sky?"

"Yes." Noel smiled. "As for the first problem, we'll only need to meet right in the corner instead of in front of a certain wall. With so many demons getting killed in one's corner, it can act as a wall, stopping the demons from seeing what happened on the other side. Then, we can focus our force on eliminating the demons on a side where the Peak Level Demons come. Two of us will stay at the other corner to stop the rest of the demons while six people will take down the Peak Level Demons."

"Mhm?!" Even Paul was surprised. He thought Noel planned to let them crash in front of a certain wall and split their forces to clean up that wall. But with this plan, they could shorten their time since they could concentrate their forces.

It took only two seconds before Paul accepted the suggestion. And this was the result.

Looking at this wall made of demon corpses, he realized the demons couldn't even see what was happening on the other side. So, he immediately picked up Stella and landed next to Anna.

"In that case, let's clear this side of the wall before regrouping with Paul and the others." Jonathan nodded.

Stella and Anna nodded with a smile, ready to exterminate all the demons.

They immediately began killing while Rose kept the surveillance, making sure nothing went wrong.

She couldn't help but smile when seeing this efficiency. "So, this is the new Zero Squad."

Chapter 334 Alone

Anna and Stella were going wild on the battlefield. Stella could utilize her wind to improve her speed while Anna moved like a lightning. They kept eliminating demon after demon while covering each other up.

On the other hand, Noel had been using his Sword Fall and Bouncing Spiritual Slash to kill the demons they didn't manage to kill in the first strike.

The same applied to Jonathan. In the end, they had an easy time during this battle, allowing them to conserve their energy.

It seemed that the squad to take down the Peak Level Demons had been decided.

The moment they cleared up the entire wall, Rose's voice echoed in their ears.

"Jonathan and Noel will be going to kill the Peak Level Demons while Stella and Anna handle the rest of the demons."

"Got it!" Jonathan nodded and immediately brought Noel to the other battlefield.

"For now, I'll be with you, making sure the demons can't harm you. If you have anything strong that can penetrate the Peak Level Demon's skill, then you can use it. If possible, attack them from afar like that burst of ice of yours."

Noel nodded, trying to formulate a plan to handle these two demons.

The two Peak Level Demons seemed to be buffalo and a snake. Paul was fighting the buffalo and achieved a better result compared to Zion and Ben.

The buffalo had both horns crushed, while the snake only had some superficial wounds on its body.

As soon as he noticed them, Paul pointed at the snake and shouted, "There!"

Jonathan and Noel immediately headed straight to help Zion and Ben.

The snake spat a mouthful of poison toward them as if telling them not to get involved in the fight.

However, Jonathan used his Telekinesis to disperse the poison. Still, the poison seemed to be able to melt everything it touched and it was releasing gas after melting them.

Jonathan hurriedly used his Telekinesis to push the wind so that the poison gas would be blown away in another direction.

Meanwhile, Zion leaped back to them and explained the situation. "The snake has powerful poison and sturdy skin. If we want to attack it, we have to either release an attack that can destroy the scale or hit it from the inside."

Before Noel said anything, he actually approached the poison and used his Water Purifying. Although he didn't know whether it would work or not, the poison was also liquid, so the purification should be able to affect it in a way.

Surprisingly, the poisonous purple liquid suddenly turned transparent.

"!!!" Jonathan and Zion widened their eyes, not believing what they saw. "What are you doing?!"

"I'm trying to purify this liquid." Noel thought for a moment and said, "I think you can allow me to enter the snake's body and kill it from the inside. My attacks will be useless against this snake from the outside, but the inside shouldn't be tough. Even I can cut it."

"No!" Jonathan shouted with a cold expression while Zion explained, "We're not at a level where we can get reckless yet. I know that you're planning to get the best result, but this is not the way to do it. As expected, your brain is good since you can come up with one plan after another."

"But you're lacking compassion. Do you think we like to see you recklessly playing with your life? Noel, look around you!" Zion had noticed Noel's weird behavior. He had good observation ability, but everything seemed to be centered on him.

Even Noel didn't realize he had been acting this way. He might have gotten used to the fact that his parents had died, so there was no one he should think about anymore. This way, he could recklessly push his body to achieve his goal.

This kind of thought had been planted for a few months and became his new reality. Even the letter couldn't really break apart this feeling.

Even when fighting together with Anna, Noel still acted like he was alone. That was why he had been trying to convince himself otherwise. And the first time he did, it was by thanking Anna for being with him during the rescue mission.

He wasn't alone anymore. The people around him were like brothers and sisters that would help him instead of plotting against him. The Zero Squad was his new family.

Zion gently flicked his forehead and smiled, "Stop fighting alone, Noel. We're here."

Noel bit his lips. This was the breaking point of his heart, making him realize that he wasn't alone anymore. The letter and Anna might crack his cold heart, but Zion's words truly shattered everything.

"Ah..." Noel had forgotten this feeling. There were people beside him. He wasn't alone anymore.

Noel wanted to apologize, but he knew it wasn't the time. Instead, he said, "Let's change our plan. Ben and Jonathan will stop the snake for a while. Zion and I will kill the snake."

Noel didn't specify his plan and might even try to do something reckless again, but when they saw his expression, they realized Noel had changed.

Zion smiled. "Sounds good to me."

Jonathan nodded as he flew toward the snake's head, helping Ben stopping the monster.

Meanwhile, Zion ran toward the snake's body with Noel while asking, "So, what are we going to do?"

"Let's plant a nail on its body!" Noel smirked while summoning his Sword Fall. This sword was heavy and sturdy, so it shouldn't break against this snake's scale.

Zion finally agreed to his plan. Noel used his control to make the three swords curve and fly to the snake.

Cling!

As expected, the swords couldn't even leave a dent in the scale. However, Zion came in and kicked this sword as hard as possible.

Bam!

Shaaaa! The snake screamed in pain because the sword managed to pierce through its skin.

Zion didn't stop there as he kicked the other two swords, impaling the snake.

The snake tried to turn around to stop Zion and Noel, but it was stopped by Ben and Jonathan.

,m Zion smiled. "Good! Let's continue! We will be able to kill this snake after repeating this a few times!"

"No, no need." Noel's voice entered his ears, startling Zion. The latter turned around and found Noel rushing toward the snake's body.

The three giant swords suddenly disappeared into thin air, exposing the three holes leading into the snake's body.

"Wait, are you going to—" Zion thought Noel planned to enter through the gap.

"Of course not." Noel smiled, showing he wasn't going to be reckless anymore. Instead of going inside, Noel formed his Freezing Crystal and sent it through the hole, allowing it to explode inside.

Boom!

Chapter 335 Hopeless

Boom!

Shaaa! The snake was screaming in pain because its inside was destroyed by the ice explosion from earlier. A part of its body was frozen and an ice spike came out of the holes, injuring the demon from the inside.

A normal demon would have died from an attack like this, but as one would expect from a colossal Peak Level Demon, it managed to survive the attack.

Zion was surprised that Noel decided to attack it this way, but it was extremely useful because he managed to weaken the snake from the inside.

He hurriedly grabbed Noel and moved away, trying to see what the snake would do next.

"That's a good attack. But you truly made my heart skip a beat earlier... I thought you were going to be reckless again. No, wait. I could probably consider that action to be reckless, no?"

"Ahaha, please don't say it like that." Noel made an awkward laugh and said, "Though, this should be enough for you to deal with this demon, right?"

"Indeed." Zion nodded. "You stay here. I'll finish the rest."

He dropped Noel and hurriedly returned to the snake, kicking its body and shattering the ice inside the body. The shake of the body knocked the ice, making it pierce the demon's flesh.

With Jonathan and Ben taking care of the head, Zion could fully utilize his strength and crush the demon bit by bit, killing it within four minutes.

"Hu..." Zion let out a breath of relief, giving a thumbs up to Noel. "That's a good idea you have there, but discuss it with us before doing that."

"Indeed." Jonathan landed next to Noel and patted his shoulder. "Anyway, you should stay here or help Anna and Stella."

"I'll go help them." Noel nodded with a serious expression. Although he wanted to contribute more to the fight against the Peak Level Demon, he knew his strength and chose to work on something he could handle.

And with the help of those three, it wouldn't be too long before Paul killed the Peak Level Demon, considering he also managed to injure the demon to a degree.

"I don't have to care about them. For now, I should kill as many demons as possible to complete my task and improve my body's constitution." Noel rushed toward the city wall, only to be shocked by the numerous corpses lying on the ground. It turned out Stella and Anna had cleared an entire wall by themselves.

"This is..." Noel scratched the back of his head. "They have killed around one hundred to one hundred fifty demons in the span of ten minutes? Are they serious?"

He saw Anna and Stella talking with each other in the corner, so he approached them to offer his help, only to get a headache.

"What are you doing?! Don't think about leeching off me!" Stella shouted.

"You're the one leeching off me. I killed 78 demons earlier!"

"I killed 79 demons!"

"Don't lie! I know you only killed 50 demons!"

"You were the one lying. I killed 100 demons!"

"Just because you gave a random number, don't think you're the correct one!"

"What?!"

"..." Noel was speechless when he heard their conversation. He never expected that the two would be arguing such a foolish topic. 'Who cares about how many demons they kill in this situation? Shouldn't you be working on crushing the rest of the demons instead of arguing about this?'

Noel was dumbfounded and couldn't help but cough to let them know his presence. "Ahem."

"!!!" Anna and Stella stopped and turned around. "Noel!"

"What are you two doing here?" Noel asked, but his voice got a bit cold.

"She claimed I'm the one leeching off her. I can't stand that!" Anna pointed at Stella.

"I didn't say that," Stella shouted back, trying to defend herself.

"I don't care about your reasons now. Don't you think it's inappropriate for you two to argue that stupid topic in a situation like this?" Noel let out a long sigh. "Well, whatever. You guys can go argue for whatever reason... I'm going anyway."

Noel sighed and jumped toward the demons, killing one demon after another.

He didn't know how it started, but Rose, who had been observing the entire battlefield, couldn't help but facepalm.

"I don't know what's wrong anymore..." Rose sighed, remembering how it started.

Before they began their killing spree, Stella was challenging Anna. "It seems that you have great control over your Spiritual Energy. With that kind of control, I think you have been hiding something even greater... Why don't we have a match here?"

"You want me to use all my power? Do you think I'll tell you my secret? Even if we are from one squad, don't you think your action is a bit obvious? You've been trying to separate me from Noel this whole time." Anna snorted.

"I'm not trying to hide anything. I've told you everything with my action. In fact, why does a murderer of his family have to be so clingy to him? Are you torturing him or something?" Stella narrowed her eyes. She had been suspicious of Anna's intention this whole time, considering this pair wasn't supposed to exist.

On the other hand, Anna couldn't tell her anything either, considering no one should know about the reason why she became the culprit. This was a secret that only she and Noel could know for their plan to exist, considering Noel wanted her to kill him when the opportunity arrived.

So, Anna could only reply, "Who do you think you are to enter the problem between Noel and me?"

"I'm simply stating the fact that he is here, the Demon Relief Squad will be protecting him." Stella snorted.

"I'm also from the same squad, so I can file a complaint to Paul for this mistreatment? Besides, have you seen me mistreating him?"

"..." Stella narrowed her eyes. She had only heard about the rumor, so she couldn't confirm the truth of what had happened between them. She knew she would lose in an argument this way, so she simply escaped from it by saying, "Whatever. If that's the case, you can continue being weak and getting carried by us."

"What did you say? I don't mind getting help from others, but you? No, thanks. I'll show you that I can kill more demons than you... What will you say if this weak girl defeats you..." Anna smirked and leaped forward, making the first move.

Chapter 336 Control

"Have you cleaned up that way?" Paul asked while pointing at the north wall.

"Everything is done." Ben nodded. "Now the problem would be how to handle the next course... I'm pretty sure that they're going to claim all these demons."

"First of all, the knights have seen us killing most of the demons. So, we'll be taking at least half of the Demon Crystals, especially the two Peak Level Demon Crystals. As for the rest, they can use it to restore the city... Though, I doubt that foolish lord will do something like that.

"In any case, we'll only do our parts and leave the rest to him before filing a complaint." Paul paused for a moment. "Anyway, you are going with me after this to talk to the soldiers on the wall about our situation. The rest can move to the side to store our loot this time. That's right, you want to explain things to Noel, right, Jo?"

Jonathan nodded. "Well, thanks for the consideration."

Paul nodded. After giving the instruction, he walked with Ben to the wall to handle the transfer of the possession before assuring the citizens about their situation.

Meanwhile, Jonathan began to take out the Demon Crystals from the corpses with his Telekinesis and gathered them in one place so that Stella and the others could handle the rest.

Of course, Jonathan didn't go too far since he might need to help them in case they needed it.

Noel was sitting in front of him, listening attentively.

"Alright. Let's start the lesson about Spiritual Energy." Jonathan raised his palm and formed a ball of Spiritual Energy. "I don't think I have to go to the basics anymore about Spiritual Energy, so I'll start from this. What do you think about this ball?"

"It's a lump of Spiritual Energy."

"That's right." Jonathan nodded and raised another hand, forming another ball. But this time, the ball looked like a blazing fire. "What do you think about this one then?"

"Mhm... A flame?" Noel furrowed his eyebrows, looking at this flame made of Spiritual Energy. Of course, it was impossible to do it unless one had a Fire Spirit. And the flame that Jonathan made was made of gold like the color of the Spiritual Energy. "Hmm... not a flame..."

"That's right. This is not a flame, but the same Spiritual Energy as the one in my left hand. I pour the same amount of Spiritual Energy, yet, they're acting differently. Why do you think?"

"Is it about Control? But I'm not very sure how control can affect the Spiritual Energy..." Noel shook his head helplessly.

"That's right. It's about Control. When you pour the Spiritual Energy into your weapon, how do you do it?"

"I just channel my Spiritual Energy into my weapon."

"No, I mean the details."

Noel was confused at first before understanding what he wanted. "I am channeling my Spiritual Energy from the Spirit Seal and pouring it out through my pores before infusing it into my weapon."

"That's right. When you're channeling your Spiritual Energy from the Spirit Seal, you can actually try to stop it at first. For example, imagine your Spiritual Energy is running like water. Then, in the middle of the path, there is something clogging up, causing your Spiritual Energy to be stuck. What will happen?"

"Then, the amount of Spiritual Energy I can pour will be decreased."

"That's right. Then, what if I break apart the clogged part?"

"Ah!" Noel remembered when he tried to break the dam. If he destroyed the entire dam in an instant, the water would be ravaging the land.

"This is called Hard Approach. There are two ways to control your Spiritual Energy, Soft Approach and Hard Approach. The Soft Approach is the usual way of us stimulating our Spiritual Energy. The flow is like a normal water flow. Meanwhile, the Hard Approach is where we stop it for the time being and let it out, causing a burst of Spiritual Energy.

"I think you have been doing it without you noticing. I'm talking about your swordsmanship... I'm not sure about the swordsmanship itself, but I can see that you can actually release the Spiritual Energy in those two ways depending on your plan.

"And I think you can see the power behind these two..." Jonathan threw the rounded ball forward and exploded it, causing a small gale. But when the blazing ball exploded, it caused a shock wave, showing the difference in their power. "You can see the power behind them. To be fair, Spiritual Energy is intangible, meaning you can turn them into anything.

"For example, let's replicate your Bouncing Spiritual Slash. Look at this..." Jonathan formed another ball with the Soft Approach before throwing it forward. The ball suddenly started bouncing in the air, imitating the Bouncing Spiritual Slash.

"What?" Noel gasped.

"It's nowhere your Bouncing Spirit Slash, but you get the idea. By controlling the Spiritual Energy in a certain way, humans manage to create all those Spirit Techniques. Of course, what weapon you're using, your experience, your memory, your emotion, everything... The way you're utilizing your Spiritual Energy will be unique and when you use that control to create something unique to yourself, you've created a Spirit Technique.

"Of course, everyone can create Spirit Technique, but only those who are good will be recognized as a proper Spirit Technique.

"Even I can create a Spirit Technique right now, like this." Jonathan raised his hand and enveloped his right arm with Spiritual Energy. It maintained its form like hands like a glove. "Look, my Spiritual Energy is acting like a glove. That can be called a Spirit Technique, but it doesn't have a use, so why should anyone recognize it as a proper one? I think Anna can show one with Hard Approach for you!"

"Hmm?" Anna felt like she was being called out and saw Jonathan forming a glove. Jonathan called her and asked her to form the same thing to show Noel the importance of control.

Anna smirked as lightning began to spark around her right arm. But unlike Jonathan, she covered her right arm entirely with lightning that gradually turned into a dragon. This raging lightning felt like they were going to blast someone upon touch.

"Like this?" Anna smiled.

Chapter 337 Claim

"Anna, you should be able to control your Spiritual Energy to cover your entire arm with Hard Approach, right?" Jonathan asked after calling Anna.

Anna nodded before releasing her Spiritual Energy around her arm. That Spiritual Energy created a lightning spark and eventually turned into a dragon. "Like this?"

"Yes." Jonathan nodded while explaining it to Noel. "This is what I'm going to teach you. If you master this technique, you should be able to give more power to your abilities."

"That's true. For example, this Bouncing Spirit Slash we've learned." Anna agreed and waved her sword, releasing the sword strike forward. The sword strike began bouncing around the tree and hit it multiple times. "This is the usual strike, but..."

She released the Bouncing Spirit Slash again, but this time with the hard approach. There was no difference in the bounce, but the moment it hit the tree, the sword strike exploded, crushing it.

"There you go. You can see the power yourself, but there is one thing that I have to warn you about. There is a reason why the technique is called complete, even though it can be used through either the Soft or Hard Approach.

"When they created their technique, they should have foreseen this situation. Yet, they still choose to go with Soft Approach like this Bouncing Spirit Slash. The Bouncing Spirit Slash focuses on your control to make the sword strike hit the enemy as many times. In fact, you can even make it not attack your enemy just to confuse them. It's not meant to be shooting your enemy like what I did earlier.

"If you want another example, let's go with a spear thrust. If you thrust your spear and use the Hard Approach, the energy will explode, right? Then, what if you use that thrust to create a hole in your enemy's body? At one glance, there is nothing wrong with both of them. But in the second case, you

should add a spin into your thrust, making your Spiritual Energy like a torrent to increase its penetrating power. But with this, it has become a different kind of technique.

"Thus, the reason why the technique doesn't need to be used in both ways. There is another technique that fixes the mistakes.

"I haven't told you anything about this method because your body has naturally changed the approach when using your abilities, so there's no need to add another information that makes you doubt your sword," Anna ended the explanation with the reason she never mentioned anything about Spiritual Energy.

Of course, Noel didn't have any right to demand it from her. That was why he took this information carefully.

Jonathan was impressed by Anna's knowledge. Despite her age, her knowledge was vast, making him wonder if she had started learning from her mother's womb.

Anna had a huge secret. This was clear in his heart, but whether he wanted to get involved in that secret or not was another question.

"I think you have explained enough. I'll deal with his training." Jonathan waved his hand, asking Anna to go back.

Although he agreed with Anna's opinion about Noel's strength, he still chose to teach Noel about it. In his perspective, Noel wasn't someone that brittle. He believed Noel could overcome his doubt and grow even stronger.

"There you go. I think you have learned the basic knowledge about the approach, so I'm going to ask you again. Are you planning to learn this?"

"Yes. I know that there is a reason why we use only one approach. If that's the case, can't you say I'll be able to wield my power better because I've mastered both approaches?" Noel smirked excitedly.

"..." His motivation was indeed amazing. Jonathan even thought this was the reason why Noel could reach this level within a year. He agreed with him and began teaching him the details about the two approaches.

Meanwhile, the rest was finishing their own tasks so that they could leave this place as soon as Paul and Ben had done with the hand over.

It took them an hour before Paul came back. It seemed that the soldiers of this fort had come out as well to take care of the corpses. Their Demon Crystals could be used as an initial fund for the restoration of the fort and the body could be used to feed the people. Hence, the soldiers happily received them and felt thankful for the Demon Relief Squad.

They even saw the squad off while waving their hands and only started working until the two carriages had disappeared into the horizon.

The Demon Relief Squad was heading straight to the neighboring fort to give their report while the soldiers began to bring the corpses inside.

They didn't realize that the fort was going to experience another tribulation, but this time it didn't come from the outside.

The lord had gotten the report about the work completion by the Demon Relief Squad. The soldiers had seen their figures, but they didn't know anything about them because no one ever mentioned the Demon Relief Squad.

This was where the lord began to claim their deeds.

The lord smiled and said to the butler, "We're going to make a festival for the restoration of the fort by using the meat we've got from them. And inside the festival, I want you to bring all the merchants together to make them feel grateful to me who has used my personal connection to solve this problem. Don't ever let them know this is the work of the Demon Relief Squad."

"Those foolish bastards. It's your women's honor to be picked by me, but they refused. Since they weren't known by the people, this would be a good time to take the credit from those barbarians." The lord smirked.

Little did he know, Paul was saying the exact thing. "...Or so he would say in this situation. Ah, I love it when people think we're barbarians. We can completely be let off the hook because our brains are just brawl and use that to our advantage to hit the bad nobles. Let's see what will happen next..."

Chapter 338 Reward

"Whoo!"

"Thanks the lord for saving us."

"We can finally restore our previous life."

"The lord is even sharing the meat with us to go through this winter."

"The lord is amazing. The second young master should be the next lord of the Lawrence!"

"But I've heard from the soldiers that there was a group of people who handled all those demons. Where are they?"

"They must be the people from the Lord himself."

"But shouldn't the Demon Banner Army be the one solving the problem with demons?"

"Don't forget that we're in Lawrence's territory. They have lasted for generations in defending this area, so of course, their strength is enough to handle all these demons!"

"Long live Young Master Hagen Lawrence."

The people were cheering. Despite the temperature that had dropped due to the winter, they could finally smile, knowing that this winter was survivable because of the meat.

Meanwhile, the lord himself could get recognition from the family and should get a huge advantage in this battle of succession.

This was a win-win situation, except for the fact that they disregarded the true helper this time, the Demon Relief Squad.

A guy, who was just cheering with the people a moment ago, suddenly stopped and returned to his house. There wasn't a smile on his face. Instead, he looked at these people and the lord in contempt.

When he opened his door, there were a few cages storing pigeons. He hurriedly walked toward one of them and put a small scroll into the small tube attached to the bird's foot.

After that, he opened the window and let the bird fly.

...

On the other hand, Noel couldn't help but ask, "By the way, if we leave them here, how do we prove them claiming our deeds? If we stay there, they don't dare to do it. But now that we've left, I don't think we can prove it."

"Ah, you don't have to worry about that. You should know about the Demon Observer Squad, right?"

"Yes."

"If the Demon Observer Squad is in charge of the investigation of the demons, the Demon Beholder Squad is the one monitoring us. In other words, they're the ones who keep us in check.

"I mean, sometimes people abuse their authority, right? That's why this Demon Beholder Squad has to be formed. They'll watch how we perform and report it to the headquarters.

"Of course, they're not solely observing us, they also watch the behavior of the nobles and handle it when they abuse their authority. In other words, they're a double edged sword, so all we have to do is perform our duty and let them do the rest.

"With their observation and our complaint, the Demon Banner Army will handle the problem." She smiled.

Noel furrowed his eyebrows, feeling something was missing. "If they're known, shouldn't the noble be afraid of them?"

"Not really. They simply don't know about their existence because Demon Beholder Squad is the name that only the Zero Squads know. What people know is the Demon Adjudicator Squad and people think they're simply the people who will investigate our behavior when nobles file complaints."

"Oh... Does that mean you also have one in my family's former territory?" Noel asked.

"Ah..." Stella scratched the back of her head, wondering how to explain this.

Noel only chuckled. "I don't blame you or anything. In fact, this is truly an amazing system. It seems that each squad has its own purpose, which makes the Demon Banner Army very versatile and can adapt to all situations."

"Well, yes. So, we'll just go to the neighboring fort and file a complaint about our treatment and the headquarters will review the information from the Demon Observer Squad before handling the situation."

"Understood." Noel nodded with a smile.

As she explained, the bird that had been sent by the Demon Observer Squad had arrived at the headquarters.

"Mhm..." The staff in the headquarter opened the message and furrowed his eyebrows. He hurriedly straightened his back, fixed his clothes, and went straight to the commander. "Commander. We've received information about the abuse from Lawrence Fort."

"Come in," said the commander as the door opened itself as if following the commander's order.

The staff hurriedly entered and gave him the letter.

The commander opened the letter and read it for a while before calling, "Tell Milfa to handle my work next week. I'll solve this problem. Also, inform Mark to prepare for my trip to the Lawrences, including the merchants, a few soldiers, and citizens from the Lawrence Fort as witnesses."

"Yes, Sir."

The commander then waved his hand, dismissing the staff. The fort would only be reopened tomorrow or the day after because of the incident, so he couldn't really go right away.

However, the moment it was reopened, they had a perfect chance to get merchants and commoners in that fort to testify.

And that was all he needed to get whatever he wanted from the negotiation.

Noel didn't know everything that happened behind the scene, but if the complaint was actually working, the Demon Banner Army truly had a good system.

As soon as they reached the next fort, they didn't announce their identity as the Demon Relief Squad and picked the best inn. Instead, they just let the soldiers know they were normal people and rented some rooms in a good but cheap inn until they received their next mission.

Of course, now that they had taken care of the money problem with the Demon Crystals they got from the hunt.

It was the time for Paul to give rewards to those who contributed to the battle.

He gathered the entire group in one room as he stated, "There are two Peak Level Demon Crystals in my hand. These are the symbols of the people who have the highest achievement in the last battle.

"Hence, I will announce those two names to receive their trophy. Even though her role didn't stand out too much, we all knew that without her, we wouldn't be able to produce such a perfect result. So... Rose!"

"Yes." Rose received the Peak Level Crystal from him and returned to her seat as Paul continued to the second biggest contributor.

"Despite joining the squad recently, he has proven himself by creating a plan that could make us complete the mission easier. He even helped taking down a Peak Level Demon before helping us eliminate the demons around the wall. He is truly befitting this position. Noel!"

"Yes." Noel smiled and stood up.

Paul thought Noel's contribution was slightly bigger than Rose's, but the reason why he chose Rose as the first one was because he didn't want Noel to be complacent after this achievement. He knew Noel would go far further from this spot, so he placed him second in the hope for him to continue improving.

At the very least, he didn't suppress his achievement and gave him enough recognition.

Chapter 339 Facts

One week later.

The commander was sitting in front of Earl Lawrence. He crossed his arms while staring at the Earl coldly.

The Earl wasn't aware of what happened in his fort. He asked with a calm expression. "I wonder what's the purpose of your visit today, Mr. Oscar... I can safely assume it's not to drink some tea, right?"

The Earl glanced to the window as if looking at the people he brought into his residence before continuing, "Especially after bringing those people."

Oscar also didn't plan to beat around the bush. He was already too busy with his work, so he immediately stated, "It's simple. I want to ask whether the Earl doesn't put us in your eye or something."

"Mhm?" The Earl felt something wrong with that statement. He had been doing business with the Demon Banner Army this whole time, so of course, he wouldn't want to offend the Demon Banner Army for no reason.

He furrowed his eyebrows and asked, "Can you explain what do you mean by those words?"

"To put it simply, your second son, Hagen Lawrence, has threatened my Demon Relief Squad. As the Earl, you should know the circumstances of your fort, right?"

"Of course. I've received a report that there was an attack from the demons and my son had splendidly destroyed them..." Upon saying it, he began connecting the dots. His expression was gradually distorted as if the more he realized things, the more he was afraid of the consequence.

"Your second son has forced my Demon Relief Squad, specifically the Zero Squad..." The commander paused for a moment. When he heard the commander mentioning the 'Zero Squad,' his face became pale because every noble knew what it meant to be the Zero Squad.

It was basically the pinnacle of existence of the fifteen squads of the Demon Banner Army. And Demon Relief Squad was among the top five squads, so he knew the importance of that zero squad.

That was where the commander butchered the earl with his words. "Your son has forced my Demon Relief Squad to stay in his mansion after they've rejected it."

"That's... that's must be his way to be polite. Your Demon Relief Squad has gone all the way to the fort to help my son, so he should at least offer you place to stay and let you rest before doing your mission." The earl tried to explain, avoiding the blame.

Unfortunately, the commander had prepared for everything. He added, "Of course, my Demon Relief Squad would love to stay in that mansion if the situation allowed it. Sadly, the fort situation is a mess.

"If I'm not wrong, there are granary and food storage in your fort that can last for a whole month even if you have to feed the whole city."

"Yes, that's correct. One month should be enough to arrange a large-scale reinforcement." The Earl nodded, confirming their existence.

"Yet, what the people said about the situation was vastly different. The fort looked like a slum. The gloomy atmosphere and the preying gaze made my people uncomfortable. I've brought a few commoners from that fort to testify the situation on how your second son didn't open the food storage and let the people suffer.

"It seems they could barely eat from the meat that the soldiers brought back for them. This is quite an unfortunate thing, isn't it..." The commander narrowed his eyes.

The earl gulped down, but before he could explain, the commander had continued, "Our Demon Banner Army acts for the people, so our Demon Relief Squad would like to move immediately to restore the fort.

"However, the moment they met the lord, they were forced to stay. My squad had smelt alcohol and sweet perfume in their meeting... I don't have any plan to teach Earl Lawrence how a noble should act. But I've heard that your son has been forcing the women on that fort to satisfy his need in order to feed their family. Of course, that didn't really matter to my Demon Relief Squad.

"It's just... with how your son acted, I felt unsafe to leave my Demon Relief Squad in your son's hand, especially with the fact he forced them to stay. We've three beautiful ladies in our squad after all... I presume you understand what I mean."

The Earl didn't say anything this whole time. But he was already raging inside, cursing his son for making this mess. Fortunately, this action could still be tolerable. As long as he gave a bit of compensation, the commander wouldn't mind ignoring this problem.

Unfortunately for him, the commander had just started.

"Well, let's ignore that problem for the time being. Let's talk about how he insulted my people. We might have different squads, but it doesn't mean we're not solid. Ask your soldier what they think about their comrade and you'll understand what it feels to have your comrade being insulted when the one who insulted them was actually asking them to help him. Really shameless..."

"That's... You can't just make up things, Mr. Oscar. There is no witness. If you claim everything without a witness, I can consider it as you making things up!" The Earl gritted his teeth.

"Of course." The commander rolled his eyes as if he had expected it. He continued, "I'm telling you about that reason not to pressure you but to let you know why my Demon Relief Squad has to leave the mansion.

"After that insult, our Demon Relief Squad left the mansion, but I already told you that our Demon Banner Army acted for the people, right? Despite being insulted, we only left the mansion but didn't abandon our mission. We wanted to leave to finish the mission as soon as possible.

"Yet, before leaving that mansion, your son stopped them and pointed his sword at them..." The commander became even colder as there was even a trace of killing intent emanating from his eyes. He asked with a cold tone. "Say, Earl Lawrence... are you trying to pick a fight with us?"

Chapter 340 Anger

"Earl Lawrence... are you trying to pick a fight with us?"

Feeling the cold gaze from the commander gave chills down his spine. His body trembled a bit but he still had to act calm and said, "There must be some misunderstanding between them. I'll try to summon my son to listen to what he has to say first. Please calm down, Sir Oscar."

"Oh! There is no misunderstanding, Earl." The commander shook his head. "After leaving that place, my team was acting separately and dealt with the enemies according to the missions. All the soldiers had seen their gallant appearance.

"If you asked any soldiers, they would say the same thing. A group of eight people slaughtered close to one thousand Demons and two Peak Level Demons.

"But there is actually something good from what I've heard in that city. I've brought commoners and merchants from that place to testify it. Right now, they don't understand what has been transpiring between my Demon Relief Squad and your son. Even I ask my subordinate to invite them here, so they don't know anything about the current situation.

"If that's the case, how about asking them right now? What is happening inside the fort?" The commander smirked and added, "I'm pretty sure they're going to praise your son. After all, the demon corpses that our squad has gathered have been handed over to your soldiers to restore the peace inside the fort.

"There is even a celebration for the fort restoration and because there is no more threat from the demons, the fort can be opened again. Take a look at this, don't you think it's something praiseworthy?" The commander smirked.

If this was a normal situation, he would be praising his son nonstop. But the reason commander brought it up was none other than because his son had made the greatest mistake in his life.

The Demon Banner Army focused on their mission because they acted for the people. However, never claimed their deeds because they weren't the dog of the nobles. The Demon Banner Army was a third party that kept this kingdom going.

And claiming their work meant considering them beneath the noble. Just like how the nobility, the higher ranking family had the right to look down on lower ranking families, but this was simply due to the fact both of them were noble. If a baron or count was insulted by another party that wasn't a noble, this meant war.

"Not only did your son claim those eight people were the mercenary he hired, but he also insulted them by letting them know they were only barbarians. I see, so it seems this is the stance of the Lawrences.

"Since we're only a barbarian, I'm sure you don't want to cooperate with us anymore. If that's the case..." The commander smirked. "We'll cut off our ties with the Lawrences and we'll set up a new border with Count Heston as a new outer ring."

"!!!" Earl Lawrence widened his eyes in shock. Count Heston's territory was right behind his territory. If he set up Count Heston as the new outer ring, it meant there wouldn't be any more help from the Demon Banner Army. Not only the fort, but this city he ruled would be razed down to the ground by the demons.

The fact that the Demon Banner Army left his Lawrence Territory alone would mean mass migration from both people and merchants. They didn't have any more stability staying in this place, so there was no reason for them to stay there.

With such an empty territory, his territory would no longer exist.

"That's... That's not the stance of our Lawrence Family. We have had a good relationship with the Demon Banner Army this whole time. This is because my son is still too young that he doesn't under—"

Before he finished, the commander stopped him by saying, "Oh, it's not your Lawrence Family? But if I'm not wrong, your son is an adult. He should be around twenty this year, right? And you say he's still not understanding the big picture?"

"Then, I have to question your teaching, Mr. Lawrence. Have you been teaching your son to claim everything that is not his? If that's the case, then I have to reconsider the credibility of your words.

"Maybe I have to check the record of our operation in your territory to make sure that we're not taking advantage like your slave." The commander stood up and said, "Oops, I've said enough. I don't like teaching how you should act as a noble because that's your territory and you're the government. But I won't allow you to treat us like a slave, Mr. Lawrence.

"I've said everything, so it's time for me to leave." The commander turned around as if he was planning to leave.

The Earl hurriedly stopped him. "Wait, Mr. Oscar. There must be a misunderstanding between us."

Oscar stopped like he wanted to talk more about the compensation, but suddenly, he started walking again as if he didn't care about it. "I'm going to leave. If this is how the Lawrences acts, we're going to leave the Lawrence Territory. You may complain to a marquis, a duke, or to the royal family, but I'm pretty sure they understand who is in the wrong."

Earl Lawrence's face became pale. Those families would surely take his side if the enemies could be easily handled. But even the Royal Family didn't like to antagonize the Demon Banner Army that easily. Hence, they would simply abandon him.

The Earl knew that his territory would go to ruin if nothing was done.

He gritted his teeth and slammed the table. "Aaaaahhhh! That cursed idiot!"

The Earl gritted his teeth. He had received that Hagen had handled the problem well and he was about to call him back to consider the matter of succession. But it turned out he had been deceived by his own son that wanted to destroy this family.

"Leyfon!"

"Yes, Sir." A butler entered not long after with a serious expression.

"Bring that bastard Hagen back here even if you have to cut his limbs and drag him here!" The Earl gnashed his teeth while giving the order.

Even the butler could feel his anger and immediately left the room to not get involved with his wrath.

Hagen, who was drunk in his achievement, didn't know about his impending doom.