

SPELLCRAFT 461

SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar

Chapter 461: Lydia Of Blanc

Every Demon Tribe had its specialty, ranging from Magic Abilities to Brute Force.

However, there was a Tribe that excelled in none of those aspects.

They were blank canvases that didn't take on a particular specialty, but could fluidly adopt whatever qualities suited their needs at any particular moment.

They were the Whites of the Demon Race—also known as Doppelgangers of Shapeshifters.

Standing at the pinnacle of them was the Demon Lord, Lydia of Blanc.

As the one who had contributed the most to the imminent war—thanks to her unrivaled intelligence and wits—Lydia was undisputedly an important piece in the grand scheme of things.

Her subordinates were spread throughout the Kingdom, all taking various forms in order to gather Intel.

Their information network was also foolproof, so there was no leak or chance of suspicion on the part of their enemies.

As the one at the helm, and also the one who was entrusted with such responsibility, Lydia's area of assignment was none other than Ainzlark Academy—one of the three major pillars of the Eastern Kingdom.

The Merchant City could only be considered important for economic reasons, and the Royal Capital was already being handled by the Organization they were partnered with.

In order to avoid a clash with them, Lydia decided to keep her paws off the Royal Capital—assigning only a few agents there for simple espionage.

Ainzlark Academy was a vast expanse and would be considered impregnable by most. But, she was Lydia of Blanc.

Such a fortress was nothing to her.

Doppelgangers had the ability to take on the form of their targets, becoming exact copies of their designated prey.

Usually, it would only be external, but if they used Magic to consume and analyze their targets, they could mimic more than just that.

Using these special features, Lydia was able to successfully invade Ainzlark Academy as security personnel.

It was an optimal role for her to perform.

Not only was she granted access to the school grounds as a patrol officer, but she could also interact with the adults and obtain valuable information in form of casual conversations.

The man she was initially been disguised as had long digested into her system. It was thanks to this that she had been able to perfectly mimic every aspect of him.

However, having the identity of a guard was not enough for her new mission.

'Find and destroy the Weapon!'

The Humans were developing an ultimate device that could serve as a threat to their Invasion. Lydia had been given the mission to destroy said device before they began their invasion.

As planned, they would strike the Eastern Kingdom in two days, and she had to achieve her objective before that time was reached.

'I can't fail!' The Demon Lord thought to herself as she carried out her duties diligently.

As expected of someone of her caliber, she had the perfect clue on how to access the location of the device.

'That man... Maro!'

He was the reason she came across the blueprint of the device, in the first place.

Sure, he was an exceptional man in his field, but he wasn't very bright in other aspects. Though he had tried his hardest to be cautious, Lydia had still been able to get her hands on the Blueprint in his office and duplicate it.

Now that she was given the mission to subvert their plans, it was already a given that she would use the weak link to gain access to the secret location of the weapon.

And so, she struck!

The poor human didn't even see it coming—how she attacked him in his office and so easily devoured him.

Yes, Lydia consumed Maro—absorbing him into her blank white body.

He couldn't even make a sound since he was paralyzed, and all his nerves were rendered obsolete.

In a few seconds, he had become a part of her.

And then, Lydia transformed into Maro.

All his memories and information were transferred to her neural storage space, and she got even more information for her allies.

At that moment, Lydia was ecstatic.

'I have more than I bargained for! With this, I'll prove my worth even more!' Her mind erupted in glee.

But, it was too early to celebrate!

Her mission came first.

Thanks to the man's memories, she finally figured out the location of the weapon... and the fact that it was close to completion.

If she had delayed for a single day longer, then things could have gone awry for her.

"Now, then... shall we get going?" Lydia grinned with Maro's face.

It was a twisted smile that didn't suit the man one bit, but she ignored that fact.

Her mission was at the forefront of her mind, and Lydia finally had everything she needed to execute it.

Once she was done, she would return to the Demon Encampment and report all she had done and learned.

Surely, all her Intel would be highly appreciated, and she would be praised for all her efforts.

'Maybe... Abellion will finally...!' She blushed with her manly face.

It caught some attention of the few students who watched her/him as she/he traversed the school grounds.

'No. Not now! Focus!' Lydia chastised herself internally.

She didn't want to waste any more time. It wasn't because she was being impatient, but because the project was advancing at a terribly fast pace.

If she didn't make her move soon, then...

'There's ask the possibility that they might swap out the location and I won't be aware.'

Besides, according to the memories gotten from the man, Maro, the others who were jointly working on the project were busy at the moment.

'The one called Aloe Vida is busy with a lecture. Neron Kaelid is handling affairs concerning a Royal Draft. Anabelle Frederick is also busy working on her personal project—whatever it is.'

So far, Lydia had been able to gauge the level of threat everyone in Ainzlark posed to her. That was why, other than Neron Kaelid, she wasn't exactly concerned about anyone else.

Even if they stood in her way, she would eliminate them without hesitation.

Her window of opportunity had finally opened up, and it was time to strike.

'I'll soon complete the mission!'

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Chapter 462: Sabotage

"So this is it?"

Lydia, still in the form of the middle-aged man, Maro, walked comfortably into the building.

The structure had no windows, only allowing the faint illumination of the gems all around to shine their light.

'They certainly didn't make it easy to find...' She thought to herself as she strolled in.

This secret building was completely undetectable from the outside. Having layers of barriers and defensive spells to protect it from any Sensory, Physical, or Magical breach, it was completely impregnable.

Then again, such a term was useless for someone like Lydia.

Gaining access was easy once she knew the Activation Spell that granted her entry. It was too convenient, but that was simply because her ability was suited for such a job.

'Now, then, shall we see what we have here?'

The building's design was akin to a warehouse—having a very massive space within.

It was very tall and wide, isolated from anything else. Lydia had no in-depth idea how the cooling and ventilation system worked, but it had to be the effects of Magic Technology.

'These humans and their innovations...' Lydia spat in annoyance... and slight fear.

The more she sorted through Maro's memories, the more she realized just how dangerous they were in terms of advancement.

But, that would all be coming to an end soon.

>CLACK<

>CLACK<

>CLACK<

Before long, Lydia reached the center of the building and observed the massive structure that stood erect.

It had a weird design—similar to a pillar, or could it be better described as a tree?

It had a pronged head, and then its base was larger than normal. It was rooted to the ground, having deep claws on all four edges at its stump.

The brilliant machine warbled as it was still asleep—not yet activated.

Lydia could tell that it was a world of art... and destruction.

'It matches the blueprint perfectly. This is what I'm looking for.' Lydia grinned.

Using the Intel she got from Maro, the Demon Lord knew just how to dismantle the object. If she wanted to make it ineffective, all she needed to do was take away a few parts.

But, that was simply a temporary solution.

To completely wreck it, as were her orders, Lydia would need to take some time in dismantling the item.

'It would be better if I could make it appear as though I haven't tampered with it at all...'

That way, even as the humans tried to depend on it in their last moments, only despair would await them!

'Hehe... hehehe...hahahaha!'

>CREAK<

As Lydia was laughing internally, the door leading to the large warehouse opened, causing her to sharply turn her attention in that direction.

Her internal self was full of surprise, but she made sure not to show the slightest hint.

'W-what is she doing here?!'

The person appearing before her—now closing the opened door—was none other than a little girl.

Calling her a child wouldn't be an overstatement.

"Uh? You're here already? That's good." The girl spoke in her childlike voice.

"E-er, yeah..." Lydia had no choice but to respond in her manly voice.

She was still full of doubts and confusion, but someone as skilled as her could always play along with a surprising turn of events.

"Why didn't you turn on the lights? It's pretty dark here." The little girl clapped her hands, and instantly the Magic Ores placed on the walls and ceilings burst to life.

Bright light enveloped the Hall, causing Lydia to squint her eyes a little.

Unlike the Blacks, exposure to light had no effect on her body. But, since she was currently a human, and her eyes were suddenly exposed to light, Lydia was stunned for a moment.

"Ah, much better." The small girl smiled, exhaling with satisfaction.

As Lydia recoiled from the shock, she was finally able to get a closer look at the intruding girl.

'Tch. That's Anabelle Frederick, from his memory...'

She was an apprentice that served under Maro—and an exceptional one at that. She also possessed immense talents in Magic, Engineering, and Alchemy.

But, that was pretty much it.

Compared to a Demon Lord like her, Ana was no threat at all.

'Still, why is she here? According to the information I got...'

"... Shouldn't you be buried with your research? I'm surprised to see you here." Lydia asked.

"Oh? That..." Ana shrugged.

It wasn't exactly an attitude a junior should put up when being questioned by a superior, but Lydia was in no position to emphasize that.

"Well, I just decided to check on the project. What about you? Why are you here?"

Ana just gave a flimsy excuse, but Lydia could not nitpick on it since Maro was also not meant to be there at that particular time.

"Same reason as you. It's beautiful, isn't it? I can't get enough of looking at it." Lydia used one of Maro's frequent lines when he referred to the device being built.

Her eyes were on the weapon of destruction, and her acting was flawless. Definitely, it was enough to fool the girl.

However...

'Do I really need to fool her?'

When she thought about it well, Ana was fodder compared to a Demon Lord. Even a Demon General would be able to face her and win.

Lydia could simply eliminate her and continue her mission.

'Or better yet... I should capture her!'

Ana was close friends with Jared Leonard, a thorn in the flesh for the Demons. If she took the little girl, surely that would deal a big emotional blow to their enemy.

'Even if it's a little bit, it should make him falter a bit.'

The only question was whether their target, Jared, would care enough to act the way they wanted him to.

'Hmmm... what should I do?' As Lydia was still contemplating what course of action to take, she spotted Anabelle looking at her with unnatural interest.

It bothered her, especially since the girl's piercing gaze was uncomfortable... and a bit unsettling.

"What is the matter, Ana?"

"Fascinating... you really look like him." The girl's voice came in a soft tone.

'Uh??!' Lydia's mind sharply processed the meaning behind the human's words, still maintaining her cool front.

"Jared was right, after all. This is quite interesting."

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Chapter 463: Ana's Evolution [Pt 1]

[Days Before]

Ana was elated.

As she jumped on her bed, she was giddy and bursting with excitement.

Why?

"He actually found these? Incredible!!!" She shouted with glee.

Jared had just visited her room out of the blue and given her Lewis Griffith's Hidden Manuscripts.

Treatises that were never published.

Theories that were never shown.

Possibilities that remained unknown.

All of those were now in her grasp.

"I'm so excited! I'm so excited!"

She went through the book several times, but she hadn't started reading yet.

'Should I really begin tonight?!'

After a bit of back and forth, Ana finally picked up the first volume.

Once she finally focused her attention to read the Author's notes, she noticed something strange about it.

There were strange engravings, as well as what seemed like a Mana Circuit embedded on the parchment.

Ana had been researching Magic for very long, so she recognized a Rune when she saw one.

'But why is this here? And it's somewhat incoherent...'. The girl thought as she observed the strange flow of the code.

Finally, her curiosity got the better of her, and she eventually solved the riddle.

By infusing her Mana into the finished results, a bright blue light pervaded the room.

Once the light settled, Ana found a letter atop her bed.

It was unexpected, but the letter actually contained a message from Jared himself. She initially couldn't believe it, but the whole stuff was a test to see if she could spot, or even decipher his code.

~If you're reading this letter, that means you're skilled enough to handle what I'm about to tell you.~

Ana wanted to yell at how he underestimated her, but she kept her cool and decided to read through his message.

That was when the oddest thing was revealed to her.

~A Demon Lord is most likely going to invade Ainzlark Academy~

Jared had dropped a bombshell in his letter.

Not only did he state how and why this Demon Lord would be invading, but he also mentioned the likely scenario that would occur as a result.

To be honest, everything he said made Ana completely bamboozled.

'I can't believe this...'

But she did trust in his every word. Not only because he spoke facts, but also because he sounded so sure.

Jared was never one to be wrong on such important matters. It could have been her heart speaking, but Ana knew this for a fact.

'He's perfectly logical and on-point that it's almost scary...'

Nonetheless, Jared was yet to conclude his surprise.

~Well, that's what I have to say about it. You guys can handle the information I've given you any way you want.~

'E-eh...?'

Ana was so sure Jared would offer a plan at this point, but he simply threw the initiative on how to handle the situation into their hands.

Ana pondered on the hidden meaning behind his message, but found nothing.

~To be honest, I was planning this to be like a gift for Neron. He has been telling me how bored he has been. So, you guys can create the perfect stage by using the information I'm given you.~

Jared went on to explain the identity and ability of the intruder.

Ana wondered how he came across such detailed Intel, but she couldn't fathom it. Realizing that it was useless to question his sources, she simply kept reading.

~I'll leave everything in your care. No matter how things turn out, it'll still end up in victory. Her little interference won't be consequential in the long run. Just think of it as an exercise for fun... and a reward for your hard work.~

The boy was basically offering a Demon Lord as a reward for their efforts.

'Jared, that monster... only he can do something like this.' Ana smiled once she finished reading the letter's contents.

The young girl fell to her bed, now drained of the motivation to delve into Lewis Griffith's Research materials—something Ana would never have imagined.

She pondered on what to do with the information she had just gotten from Jared.

As he mentioned in the letter, she was the only one who was aware of the Demon's intrusion, and the Demon Lord's abilities made it impossible for anyone to detect her presence.

Now caught in a pickle, it was common sense that Ana would rely on Neron in handling the case. However...

'Huu! Finally, I have the perfect opportunity!'

... The young girl called Ana had something else in mind.

'This Lydia of Blanc... she'll be perfect for the job!'

"Jared was right, after all. This is quite interesting."

Three Automatons floated around her. They looked like small heads, but had three tentacles each—serving the functions of limbs.

Each Automaton had a single wide eye, but several functions could be performed despite their small frames.

Ana always went around with them—though they were usually in stealth mode.

The only reason the three little critters popped up at the moment was because of their automatic sensory functions.

They perceived danger!

"You... what are you saying...?" The middle-aged Maro asked as he narrowed his gaze.

Ana was simply astounded.

The more she watched the man, the more amazed she was.

"To think you can really mimic everything about your target. It's amazing. This world truly is vast." She beamed, clasping her hands together.

Many people didn't know this, but Ana's glasses were made with cutting-edge Magic Technology.

Not only could they analyze her targets, but could also scan properties and cross-reference patterns.

Even in a fight, she could see the subtle movements of her target and predict whatever moves they would make based on several external factors—such as breathing, muscle movement, eye movement, etc.

Currently, she was completely analyzing the 'Maro' in front of her, and it was a complete match with the 'Maro' she knew.

"I'm guessing you also have all his memories and whatnot. That's how you were able to find this place, right? Amazing!" The young girl clapped with genuine praise.

At this point, Maro/Lydia was in a stunned state. Not because the Demon felt cornered, but because she didn't understand one critical thing.

'Why...?!'

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Chapter 464: Ana's Evolution [Pt 2]

"So... you knew? You knew, yet you allowed all this? Why...?"

Maro's eyes narrowed as all focus was on the little child. Her behavior was not normal.

Why would she act in such a manner despite knowing so much?

"Hmm... because I was curious?" Ana murmured, giving a most surprising response.

"What? Do you not realize the kind of situation you're in?"

Lydia knew humans were foolish at times, but not to this extent.

'I should just kill her--no, I'll capture her instead--and get this over with...'

"My situation? What about it?"

"U-uh?" Lydia was unable to bear the girl's stupidity any longer.

"I believe you're misunderstanding something here..."

Now using her fingers to tilt her glasses, the girl called Ana gave a charming smile.

"You're going to die here... Lydia."

That was the height of foolishness and arrogance. Lydia couldn't tolerate any more.

'I'll neutralize her, and then destroy the device!'

>WHOOOOOSSSHHHH<

In the blink of an eye, the Demon's swift body--though still in Maro's body--approached Ana with the intent to render her unconscious.

>VWUUUUUMMMMM<

A loud hum, followed by sparks of electricity burst from the three drones that hovered around the girl, causing an instant shield to pop out of nowhere.

>BOOOMMM!!!<

As Lydia's blow hit the shield, she instantly knew that it was superior to her current physical capabilities.

"Tch!"

The recoil effect of having hit a dome of pure energy set in, causing her to leap back--just as fast as she had approached.

"There's no need to be in a hurry. I know you're worried that I could be bringing backup, but don't worry." The girl spoke calmly, placing both her hands in her lab coat's pockets.

"Your fight is with me."

It sounded absurd--a mere child against a Demon Lord! But, the girl's expression lacked any form of hesitation.

Lydia spread her senses throughout the building, but she couldn't sense any other presence besides the girl.

'She's really alone, uh? There's the possibility that the rest could be using Magic to conceal themselves, but...'

Lydia had always been the cautious type, considering as many possibilities as she could before taking any action.

However, there came times when one had to be decisive.

Now was one of such moments.

Further delay brought risk to her plan. That meant eliminating the target as quickly as possible was the best alternative.

'I shouldn't utilize too much of my abilities, but...'

The shell of 'Maro' that she employed began disappearing, taking on an unstable form, until the true form of Lydia manifested.

"Is that what you really look like? Interesting..." The girl kept smiling, hidden within her powerful barrier.

Lydia, in her white form, decided to use Magic to end matters swiftly.

"[Stinger]"

A dense concentration of air particles converged, infused with Miasma and possessing great power.

It formed a long arrow brimming with negative energy.

The Demon Lord estimated that this would be enough to pierce through the annoying barrier and give the girl a slight punishment for her arrogance.

>WHHOOOOSSSH HHH<

The lance was launched at deafening speed, meant to one-shot the target.

Of course, only non-vital areas were targeted, considering the target was still useful as a hostage. Lydia simply wanted her to feel some pain.

>WHOOOOSSSH HHH<

To her surprise, another lance appeared from the girl's side, almost looking like the [Stinger] she conjured.

The Mana-Infused Lance sharply intercepted the one of Miasma, causing a neutralizing effect.

Both Lances imploded upon impact, fading into particles of white and black.

"W-wha--??" Lydia was dumbfounded.

"Ah, so that's how Jared was able to do it. An equal proportion of Mana and Miasma will indeed cause a null effect. I wonder if I'll be able to achieve Anti-Magic if I keep exploring this..." Ana's voice once again sent the Demon Lord into a state of confusion.

Just how was that child able to cast a Spell so quickly? Not only that, but it directly countered the [Stinger] she used.

Though it was merely an Advanced Spell, [Stinger] belonged to the highest Tier within that category.

Plus, its swiftness made it a deadly tool in battle.

No matter the defense, it was guaranteed to pierce through and eliminate the target.

'So, how...?!'

The Demon Lord wasn't aware of this, but the three Automatons hovering around the young girl were the answer to her questions.

They had a shared information system, yet their neural functions were independent. In essence, the three were capable of processing information and were connected by a network to share said Intel.

Each had its function as well.

One analyzed the Magic being used.

Another calculated the appropriate action to be implemented

The final one processed the Spell to be utilized.

Finally, all three cast the Spell by utilizing the artificial Mana Core within them.

As a result, they could operate beyond the bounds of a human's capabilities.

"Well, I'm happy to know that they could react in time, even if it's someone as powerful as you..." Ana smiled at the faceless Demon Lord.

She couldn't get a read of her reaction since she looked nothing more than a white mannequin.

Still...

"I guess I'm boring you, right? Then, let's begin the real experiment."

The three Automatons switched gear from defensive to offensive in an instant.

Their eyes glowed red, and Mana surged from them in a flash.

A ball of concentrated flames gathered at the center of the three machines, focusing on the Demon Lord before them.

In a flash, the blast was launched in her direction.

Scorching flames surged forth, approaching the target at an unbearable speed, but she didn't seem bothered--not that her face showed any emotion.

"Annoying!"

In a flash, the flames were swept away by a much larger ball of water.

The body of liquid consumed the intense fire until it was no more, but as a result, the entire room was flooded with water.

It was done on purpose, though.

'Don't worry... I won't kill you yet!' Lydia grinned, preparing a lightning Spell to interact well with the water.

"[Buzz]"

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Chapter 465: Ana Vs Lydia [Pt 1]

"[Buzz]"

Purplish-Black electricity flashed from Lydia's albino hand, descending upon the body of water in its violent lash.

>BZZZZZZZTTTTZZZZZ<

Instantly rampaging the water until it began boiling and evaporating into steam, the pangs of lightning didn't stop.

Its destructive nature coiled about, heating it until everything dried up and became white clouds of hot vapor.

>BZZTZZZ<

"Now what?" The Demon Lord grinned with glee.

The building they were in was designed to prevent any external interference. Ana's confrontation was a big mistake since she was isolated from everyone else.

'No one is coming to help you, foolish child!' Lydia thought to herself, expecting to see the girl's body lying flat on the ground.

However--

"How were you not affected by the rampaging electricity?" Ana's voice called out in a small tone.

"U-uh?!"

"I didn't see you cast any defensive Magic. Ah, I see. You must have used your shapeshifting ability to turn your body into something with no conductivity... like rubber?"

The mist cleared, and Ana was busy rubbing her chin while murmuring to herself.

The Spell [Buzz] was a spell that ignored defensive barriers.

As long as it had enough conductivity with electricity, anyone and anything within reach would be under its influence.

Even though [Buzz] wasn't a lethal Spell, it still caused extreme pain and rendered its targets unconscious.

Yet...

"It's a good thing I developed a Spell that negates my conductivity. After that experience with Kuzon, I promised myself never to fall under the influence of electricity. That stuff friggin hurts, you know?"

Lydia was beyond astounded.

"Ah, my apologies. I've been rambling on and on, haven't I?" The girl removed her glasses and used a piece of cloth to rub the surface of the lens.

It had gotten quite misty, after the whole vapor experience.

This left her open, so Lydia wanted to take the opportunity. However--

>VWUUUUSSSHHH<

Several lances filled with Mana charged at her at breakneck speed.

"Tch!" She negated them with her barrier, casting a Spell in response.

Unfortunately, the Drones once again interfered.

"Ah, much better." Ana was already done cleaning her lens.

Her wide smile was so charming and innocent. One would never expect that her drones were currently firing tons of Spells at her foe.

Of course, Lydia avoided every hit.

After all, while Miasma was lethal to normal people, the opposite was also true.

Demons were weak to Mana--especially the Whites.

They had sensitive bodies. That was how they were so malleable--capable of changing forms as they wished.

This served as their greatest strength and weakness.

'Tch. Do I really have to exert myself against this child?'

While she had intentionally avoided using Spells that cost a lot of Miasma and had a low destructive range, Lydia had definitely been trying hard in the battle.

'Should I just kill her?' The thought appeared in her head.

The girl was very troublesome and unpredictable, so it was better to eliminate her as soon as possible.

'Fine. I'll just kill her!' Lydia's face morphed into a grin.

Her blank face suddenly had a slit open up, and a disgusting smile was formed from the sharp line.

"Looks like you're finally taking this seriously. I can now begin my experiment."

With the snap of her fingers, something popped out of nowhere.

It seemed like teleportation, but it had simply been the undoing of Cloaking Magic.

'W-wha--?! I didn't notice something like that was here this whole time.' Lydia's eyes bulged in surprise as she laid eyes on the new entity that now made its entrance.

It was behind the small girl, having a humanoid build.

It was slightly muscular, possessing the appearance of an average adult male.

It was, of course, dyed in a metallic color, though it shone unnaturally.

'Is that... a rare metal?' Lydia wondered, observing the construct that had just appeared.

"I present you the Ultimate Automaton, Ku-Red! Or, should I call it Ja-Zon? Uh... this is hard..."

To be frank, Ana was yet to name the Automaton behind her. It was still in its test phase, after all.

She had a policy not to name anything until it had completely been perfected.

"Well, you get the gist, don't you? This is the main reason I acted on my own. I wanted to test the capabilities of this stuff, and also find out where I need to work on."

"Are you joking? Really? You're in extreme danger, yet you want to test something?" Lydia had given up on understanding the girl's logic.

It was now painfully clear that she was an oddball even a Demon Lord couldn't see through.

"Okay, Automaton... show her a good time, okay?"

The tall construct--at least over six feet, nodded his head and moved from behind its master.

Though silent, it was emitting an aura that spoke of its resolve to fight. Standing in front of its master, for her protection and also to impress her on its progress, the machine prepared itself.

"I've taken on this farce long enough. Just di--"

In a flash, the Automaton lunged, swiftly closing the distance between itself and the target.

Before anyone could react--

>BOOOOOOOOMMMMM!!!<

--It slammed her head upon the Magic-Enhanced Concrete.

The ground trembled, and the area of impact shattered.

"Guark!" Lydia let out a sharp cough, accompanied by a surprised yelp.

She hadn't anticipated such speed and precise movement.

Still clinging unto her head, the Automaton made to hash her head further into the concrete.

"Let me goo!!!" In a brilliant burst of energy, negative power emerged from the White Demon.

The Automaton instantly knew that it had to retreat, and so it leaped backward to avoid any dangerous hits.

"You..." Lydia rose from her disheveled state

Her face, which had been bashed and disfigured instantly recovered.

It was as though she was violently beaten a few moments earlier.

If that was the only difference, then perhaps one could overlook it. But, things were now terribly more precarious.

Lydia's body was currently emitting a dangerously high amount of energy--negative energy.

"... That does it! You're dead!"

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Chapter 466: Ana Vs Lydia [Pt 2]

Of all Demon Lords, Lydia was the weakest—at least when it came to physical abilities.

In Magic, she was somewhere in the middle. In essence, an average Demon Lord.

However, her true abilities weren't tied to those things. After all... for her race, they could be whatever they desired!

>VWUUUUSSSHHH<

Miasma swirled around the Demon as her temper rose to a point where she could no longer control her primal desire—

—Destruction!

"I've had enough."

Instantly, several whips emerged from behind her—like tentacles.

They were at least six, but thanks to their rapid movements, it would be hard to estimate just how many of the rubber-like protrusions appeared.

>WHUUSHHH!!!<

The whips made sharp sounds as they lunged at the Automaton, intending to demolish it and charge at the target behind.

The hulking figure knew the dangers of the incoming attack and acted accordingly. Boosting its body with Mana, it decided to confront the threat rather than avoid it.

A proper evasion would have been possible, but that would only put Ana in danger. In order to balance the scales, a frontal assault was inevitable.

>BOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMM!!!<

Casting multiple Spells to slow down the white whips, the Automaton proceeded to generate something that was locked within his arm.

It was a small metallic item, similar to a hilt of some sort. However, once the Automaton's Mana was poured into it, the handle brought forth a blade from its edge.

>VWUUUUUMMMMM<

With an intense blue light emanating from the blade, the Automaton lunged at the whips that still approached despite its barrage of Magic Attacks.

>FWISH!<

Utilizing the blade fluidly while calculating the most optimal angle to strike, the Automaton twisted its body and slashed the tentacles.

The rubber-like whips were tougher than metal, while also being fluid enough to bend, retract, and lengthen at will.

However, having gotten enough data to support its combat potential, the Automaton's moves—Martial Arts combined with Magic—were absolutely superior.

"Gah!" Lydia groaned, annoyed without end by the Automaton's strange movements.

She could tell that she possessed more power than the machine, but it was capable of feats no living being could perform.

It was precisely because the Automaton was an automated construct that was developed using an intricate System that it gave her such trouble.

Not only was it evading her attacks at a stable pace, but it was also counterattacking.

"Tch!"

Lydia increased the number of her whips, and then proceeded to utilize Magic.

Once the numbers increased, the Automaton had his hands full, so she focused on the enemy beyond it—the girl called Ana.

Her three Automaton's still hovered around her, ready to defend if the situation called for it.

"That won't stop me!"

Lydia had been conserving her Miasma since the start of the fight, but she didn't plan on doing that any longer.

Other than the stockpile she would leave for escaping and an emergency, the Demon Lord intended on using her full strength to decimate the target.

From her shoulder emerged two extra limbs, and they pointed in Ana's direction. Another head appeared from Lydia's neck—smaller than the initial one.

"I'll simply divide my attention."

And so, while she was focused on the Automaton on one end, her other aspect would be finishing off the little girl.

>VWUUUUSSSHHH!<

Lydia generated a Spell bordering the highest Tier of the Advanced Stage once more, readying the launch at the girl. However, that was simply a prelude.

The second head of the Demon Lord grinned sadistically as she began processing another Spell, this time in the Peak Level.

>BOOOOMMMMM!!!<

As expected, the three Drones acted in tandem and blocked the initial purple blazing strike.

But, the moment this was done, the next Spell began appearing. It was a blazing inferno coupled with a storm of lightning.

Having the destructive capability that lived up to its Peak Level name, the whirling storm of flames and lightning lunged in Ana's direction.

"Ah, this could be a bit dangerous." She whispered, watching the blast draw nearer.

>BIOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!<

A large portion of the building was devastated.

Had it not been for the defensive measures given to the building, the whole place would have been destroyed to smithereens.

"How's that?!" Lydia grinned, finally getting rid of the girl that brought her so much distress.

As for the Automaton that had proven to be quite bothersome, it was now struggling in the grasp of so many tentacles.

Unable to move its trapped limbs, it merely fidgeted and spasmed.

Lydia felt satisfied that she had finally defeated the girl and her annoying toy. They proved to be nuisances, but the end had been set from the start.

'She was stronger than I gave her credit for...' Lydia thought to herself, turning to the device behind her.

As expected, despite the conflict, it remained unscathed. Happy to be finally returning to her initial mission, Lydia used her tentacles to completely break apart the Automaton behind her.

Scraps and pieces landed on the hard ground as the smell of burnt flesh and devastated machinery filled the air.

Victory was a matter long foregone.

She approached the device, now returning to her state as Maro.

The defensive barrier around the weapon was made to ensure nothing could pass through unless they were recognized.

Lydia was aware that even she could not break such a complicated and powerful defensive array. To her knowledge, it was made by none other than Neron Kaelid.

That left her no choice but to use one of the authorized personnel.

Now taking the form of the few who were granted access to the device, Lydia planned on destroying it completely.

'I can't delay any further...' She thought to herself.

"You really want to destroy it so badly, uh?" A voice appeared behind her.

'Wha—?!'

"Command: 6754 Zeta—Maro protocol."

Before Lydia could move another muscle or react to anything, her body halted completely. It was a forceful submission to the voice she had just heard.

As if that wasn't enough, Lydia could feel herself falling asleep.

Her eyes were closing, and her consciousness was fading fast.

>CLACK<

>CLACK<

Sounds of gentle footsteps echoed in the wide room, and a terrible sense of foreboding crept upon the Demon Lord as she was rendered completely defenseless and vulnerable.

"Well, looks like the results work perfectly, after all." A voice emerged from behind her.

"Experiment Complete."

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Chapter 467: Protocol

"Whew. It's a good thing I used an Identical Golem..." The small voice of a girl rang out.

Ana was smiling as she drew closer to a petrified Maro.

Even though she was supposed to have been destroyed by the devastating storm that Lydia shot at her, Ana looked very much alive.

And that was because the attack never reached her.

'Only an idiot would put themselves in harm's way—especially when against an unpredictable opponent!' Ana smiled to herself.

The one who had been engaging in battle with the Demon Lord a while ago was not her, but a lookalike Golem.

Ana had been controlling the Golem from a distanced, and her Automaton were also instructed to obey the Golem.

It made for a convincing show—which was what the girl was after.

By doing so, Ana got enough information from her target, and once the time was ripe, she acted swiftly.

'Everything worked out well, I guess...'

Ana drew close to the Demon Lord of Blanc, staring at the being inquisitively.

Even though she knew to maintain caution, the young girl couldn't help herself.

'It should be safe enough now... but I can't be too careful.'

Her three Automatons were on standby, ready to react if things ever got awry.

It was a shame that her experimental 'Ultimate Automaton' was thrashed, but it simply showed how powerful a Demon Lord was.

Her experiment had been a valuable learning experience for her.

"I should get the samples I require and then finish things up..." With that, Ana took some tools from one of the Automatons who delivered the items.

Transparent test tubes were grasped by the girl, and she began to collect samples of hair, blood, flesh, etc. from the suspended being.

"Interesting..." Ana murmured, using Magic to observe the vials she had.

Even though the Demon Lord could take on the form of anyone, she never expected that the change would be so deep.

Even down to the cells, the samples she acquired from Lydia's current state were exactly the same as Maro's.

'She really did become him!'

Well, Ana figured that would have been the case. Why else would the Demon Lord have responded to the protocol from earlier?

"I would also love to have samples when she's in her base form..."

Comparing and contrasting samples were necessary for progress.

Unfortunately, Ana doubted the Demon Lord would let her gain access to her body so freely.

The only reason she had come this far was because she transformed into Maro.

'But, I really need those samples!'

Exasperated, the little girl sighed, trying to find the most optimal solution to her predicament. No matter how hard she tried, there was only one way out.

'I'll have to get those samples... by force!'

Lydia of Blanc was a troublesome foe—and Ana had seen some of her capabilities. But, she would be a fool to imagine that everything she saw was all her opponent was capable of.

"Still, as long as I prepare adequately, I should be able to get what I need..."

Another problem that popped up was the fact that her earlier trick wouldn't work again.

The Demon Lord would also be wary of turning into Maro, since doing so would compromise her.

In all likelihood, it was more logical that Ana would be the next target of Lydia. She would kill and transform into her to access the device.

'If I had enough time, I would have also made a duplicate of myself... sigh, this sucks.'

In the end, she simply had to get what she required by taking matters into her own hands.

Was it dangerous? Yes!

However, nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Ana realized she was at a big risk, but, she couldn't back out now.

'As long as I can prepare properly... victory should be mine!'

"U-uh...?!" Lydia stirred to life as she finally regained consciousness.

She was still in her Maro form, but something felt a bit different.

Her body didn't feel the same as before, but that wasn't the most important thing.

"You...!"

The girl who was standing before her, dressed in a lab coat and donning glasses, was smiling as Lydia glared.

She seemed to be looking elsewhere, but her three Automatons made it clear that surprise attacks weren't going to work.

The more Lydia thought about it, the more confused she became—concerning her situation, and the girl called Anabelle Frederick.

'How is she still alive?!' Lydia thought to herself.

She definitely burned the girl to a crisp and destroyed her completely.

Even her Trump Card, the Automaton she employed, was destroyed.

'I think I got dizzy for a moment after she said some strange words, but I'm alright now... what really happened?'

Lydia was not in a stable mental state, but she hadn't forgotten her mission. Her eyes momentarily darted behind and she saw the structure she was meant to destroy.

Using Maro's body would have been optimal, but it didn't seem safe any longer—considering the girl was able to interfere with it somehow.

"What did you do, human?" Lydia asked, staring at the young girl, who was slowly approaching her.

"You're up already? Good. I think now is the perfect time to tell you."

'Up already? How long was I out for?!' Lydia's boggled mind struggled to process the information.

Swiftly, she returned to her original state—her blank white form.

Apparently, adopting Maro's identity was risky.

"The 'Maro' you consumed wasn't the real one. It was an identical clone I made. It's the same as the 'me' you defeated not too long ago."

"What?!" Lydia couldn't believe what she was hearing.

She had been fooled this whole time!

"I implanted memories as data into the Maro specimen, but the version of me you fight was a Golem—so it was being remotely controlled."

Lydia was still palpitating in shock. A Demon Lord like her was being toyed with by a mere kid?!

"The Clone you absorbed has protocols embedded in it. That's how I was able to control you when you transformed to Maro."

It sounded absurd, but Lydia couldn't deny that she had lost grip of her senses for a moment, after Ana said some strange words.

'Just how many more protocols exist?' The Demon Lord wasn't certain.

One thing was for sure, though.

'I underestimated her. If I'm to complete my mission successfully... I'll have to go all-out!'

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Chapter 468: Assault Mode

'I'll need to use my full power against this brat!'

As much as it pained her to make this thought, Lydia had to consider the situation carefully and act accordingly.

'I don't know how much time has elapsed. I'm at too much of a risk right now. If I don't end things quickly, it'll mean trouble!'

And so, several tentacles emerged from the white being as she glared at Ana.

Her Miasma peaked to an unprecedented height, and her body began squirming like perturbed fluids.

Four extra limbs emerged from Lydia, and three heads now stood atop her shoulder.

Her build increased, and the power she exuded was on another level entirely.

'Like this, I should be three times more efficient.'

Not only would she be able to independently handle the Automatons defending Ana, but her power would also overwhelm the young girl.

If there was anything Lydia picked up from the conversation, it was that Ana was weaker than her in combat.

If that wasn't the case, she wouldn't have gone through such an elaborate method to trap her.

Secondly, the possibility of another clone existing was very low. That meant the Ana before her was the real deal.

In the first place, Lydia had never heard of Clone Creation before. It had to be very difficult and complicated.

She couldn't have made one in such a short span... right?

Lydia tried grasping more facts from the small conversation she had with the human girl, and the bottom line was that if she increased her power and changed her approach in a fight, then victory would be hers.

"I'll kill you!" With bloodshot eyes that emerged from all three heads, Lydia widened her wide mouths and prepared for her attack.

"Assault Mode." She heard Ana say, before lunging at the little girl.

>BOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMM<

Before Lydia reached the girl, a bright beam descended from the ceiling, filled with concentrated Mana.

It would have dealt a terrible strike to Lydia if she decided to take the hit, and defending would have consumed too much Miasma.

Realizing the most optimal solution was to evade the blast, Lydia swiftly dodged the flashes of devastating light.

Unfortunately for the Demon Lord, that was enough to buy Ana enough time.

>KSHIIIIINNNNGGGG!!!<

The young girl had undergone a transformation.

She was now shrouded in armor--all Magi-Tech.

Lydia didn't know where the pieces of technology came from, but she understood that the girl before her was not the same as before.

Having wings behind her, and slim--but highly dense--metal attached to her body, she was floating with majesty.

The blue and white armor plates gleamed brightly. The center of her chest had a warbling tune and a dense concentration of power.

Lydia assumed that was the core of her suit.

Ana's three Automatons had also changed forms, now larger and having several more gear present.

Not only did they have spikes around them, their three limbs were now equipped with weapons, and the Man they exuded was immense.

It wasn't an understatement to say that the human was ready for an all-out battle.

"Bring it on, kid!" Lydia growled.

And so, launching her tentacles, she pursued the three Automatons who stubbornly evaded the numerous whips.

Their small size and flexible motion in the air allowed them to avoid the whips that chased them--though Lydia knew it wouldn't be long until she had them all destroyed.

>BOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMM<

The Automatons rapidly shot Mana Missiles in Lydia's direction, but she had already cast a Magic Spell to protect herself from such measures.

Currently, Lydia had three brains--which meant three major control centers.

One was focused on catching the Automatons and destroying them.

The second was aimed at defending herself from any assault.

The final one was going to handle Ana.

Lydia would have preferred four heads, but three was her limit.

Now handling the Automatons and the little trouble they posed, Lydia grinned menacingly at the girl in her battle suit.

"Let's go!"

>BOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMM<

In response, Ana dashed in Lydia's direction, preparing Spells from both hands, as well as the core in her chest.

"You can't beat me!" Lydia spat, shooting out an immense ray of destructive Miasma.

Ana's defenses were instantly corroded the moment they came in contact with the blast. Fortunately, she had enough speed and flexibility to avoid any damage.

>WHOOOOSHHHH<

She flew up, causing Lydia to raise her head. Before she could blink, numerous fiery blasts rained down on the Demon Lord.

"Useless!"

The flurry of flamy balls was repelled by her defensive Magic.

However, Ana was not done.

The core located at the center of her chest hummed brightly, signaling the girl that it was ready for the next phase.

"Perfect!" Beaming brightly, Ana dived straight at Lydia.

'Is she crazy?!' The Demon Lord wondered why Ana was coming straight toward the storm.

"Useless!" As soon as Lydia launched her blast of Miasma, Ana countered by releasing an equal amount of Mana.

The effect was, as expected, negation.

Both Spells got canceled, causing Ana to delve even closer to Lydia.

'W-wha--?!' Lydia was stunned, but she was still confident about her defense.

"Analysis complete!" Ana yelled, stretching her hand in Lydia's direction.

It was filled with Mana.

'She can't reach me! My barrier will--'

Before Lydia could complete her words, the defense she had painstakingly erected was nullified.

The glow in Ana's chest warbled, releasing the exact amount of Mana required to stabilize the defenses she had erected.

That was the 'Analysis' Ana mentioned before.

"N-no!" Lydia shrieked, wondering if she could erect another defensive measure before Ana's attack came--this time, changing the power she would implement.

But, it was too late!

Ana's hand was already on her face.

The Mana-Infused hand tightly clutched the white head of the Demon Lord, causing her to scream.

"I'll be taking that!"

Instantly, blasters emerged from the wings Ana employed, causing her to fly up once again.

Her hand never left Lydia's head, causing the Demon Lord's head to follow Ana as she ascended.

"N-no... Guekk!!!"

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Chapter 469: Demise Of A Demon Lord [Pt 1]

Lydia's neck stretched with the head, not letting the round white lump escape from the main body.

Even as Ana ascended, the neck followed the head she clutched tightly.

"Tch. So annoying. Just let go of one head. You still have two." Ana mumbled, generating a dense Mana Blade on her hand.

And then—

>SWISH!<

—Lydia's head was severed from the rest of her body in one clean slice.

"Guarghhh!!!" The rest of her heads screamed in both pain and shock.

"Finally, I have my sample!" Ana smiled, swiftly retreating from Lydia's body.

The Demon Lord of Blanc was still throbbing in recoil when Ana summoned yet another Automaton to store her prize within it.

The Automaton opened a compartment within itself, and Ana placed the head into the cool storage area.

"Guek... you... you..."

As Lydia growled and groaned, glaring hatefully at Ana with utter animosity, the latter didn't seem bothered.

Rather, an expression of relief spread on her face.

"Now that I'm done with what I wanted, it's time to wrap this up, don't you think?"

Lydia's body was convulsing now. Veins appeared all over her white skin and she was expanding as though she wanted to explode.

Numerous arms and tentacles emerged from the inflating white lump, and several faces began appearing all over her body—no doubt the number of people she had consumed and become.

"Original Magic..." Lydia murmured as she glared at the girl before her.

The Miasma that was covering her body was enough to disintegrate anything not shrouded in at least some form of energy as a defense.

"... [All In One]"

Lydia's body increased until it became immensely large—almost as big as half of the massive room where she fought Ana.

And this was simply because of her Original Magic's effects.

Lydia's Original Magic, [All In One], allowed her to utilize all the abilities she got from everyone she had ever absorbed.

Usually, this would mean that her Miasma and the Mana of some of her victims would clash.

However, to combat that, she developed an intricate system of various veins and arteries within her currently massive body to deliver the respective power of each person she had within herself.

Her limit was also a hundred various persons. And so, as she glared at Ana with a single large head and multiple eyes, Lydia's white obese body had several faces and body parts that served as various sources and types of power for her.

Offensive Magic.

Defensive Magic.

Destructive Magic.

No matter the kind, she had at least one variant of the sort at her disposal.

It was an ultimate form that only very few, even among her peers, could stand against. The only reason Lydia avoided using it was because it made her look so ugly and repulsive.

'I'm even more disgusting than Cerci in this form! I didn't want to do this... the reason is because of YOU!' Her glare intensified and her bloodshot eyes bulged as Ana became her central focus.

The whirring Automaton that buzzed around Lydia like flies were instantly shot down.

Their speed didn't matter in the face of absolute power, and the remnant shards of the three pesky constructs clanged on the ground.

"It's your turn!" Lydia prepared a barrage of assaults that would definitely decimate Ana.

She didn't want to remain in her form for too long, so only one hit would be enough.

"Override Protocol. Maro 1234." Ana spoke, raising a finger in response.

"W-wha—?!" Lydia's eyes bulged, frantically trying to defend herself from whatever consequence would occur as a result of having Maro within herself.

'N-no, I can't allow that!'

Quickly controlling her intricate internal system, she expelled Maro from her body, preventing any further complications from the target.

However...

"You fell for it!"

... That was simply a diversion.

>WHOOOSSH HHH<

From above, a massive amount of liquid doused the Demon Lord of Noir, completely covering her in purplish-blue glob-like fluids.

"What is... thisss?!" Lydia murmured, using her hands to observe the texture and form of the liquid that descended on her from a vat above.

"It's too late for you." Ana smiled from her distance, completely shrouding herself in a thick barrier.

"W-what are you—?!" Before she could utter another word, Lydia felt it.

"UARRRRGH HHH!!!"

Her body began to expand at an alarming rate.

All the orderly nerves within her began to burst, causing the controlled energy within to rampage.

The Miasma and Mana inside her were out of control, and their conflicting nature brought about nothing but immense pain—and the irregular swelling that never stopped.

"ARGHHH!!! Make it stop! Make it stooooopp!!!" She pleaded, but the human girl didn't even seem the least bit concerned about her.

Ana's expression was so bright, that it was almost like she was enjoying what was happening.

"Oh? You're lasting longer than the others. Just as I thought, a Demon Lord specimen is different!"

The Demon Lord of Noir now understood that it would be foolish to expect mercy from her opponent.

Ana was too immersed in her analysis, research, or experiment, to care about the pains she was going through.

Every cell in her body was dying at an alarming rate—popping as a result of Energy Overload, Energy Shock, and Energy Clash.

Pain caused tears to proceed from Lydia's eyes. She knew that this would be her death.

Not only was she unable to complete her mission, but she also failed the one whom she had the utmost respect and affection for.

'My Lord... My King... My Love...!' More tears cascaded down her bloated face.

It was too late for wishes or regrets, but... if only she knew that this was how things would go—

'I'm so sorry... I... I failed you...'

—She wouldn't have been so foolish and haughty in her thoughts.

This was the most shameful way she could die—more appalling than anything she had ever conceived.

Dying in such a grotesque form... at the hands of a single human girl—one who was most likely not an adult yet.

It truly was mortifying beyond belief.

'This is truly...'

>BOOMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
MMMM!!!<

Her body finally erupted once it arrived at the threshold—sending lumps of fat, meat, and blood in every direction.

It was a gory sight—befitting the demise of a Demon Lord.

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Chapter 470: Demise Of A Demon Lord [Pt 2]

"Urgh... it stained everywhere."

Ana's face was full of disgust and annoyance as she watched the white lumps—parts of the deceased Demon Lord—spread all over the warehouse.

"This'll take forever to clean. Oh, wait..." The young girl realized she could simply make her Automatons handle all the dirty work.

There was no need to stain her hands.

"T-that was amazing, Anabelle... you didn't even need my power..." A tiny voice emerged from within Ana.

Sparkling, yet appearing moist, the Naiad Fairy made her entrance.

She was Ana's Familiar.

"Oh, Rhea, well... it would have sort of overkill. Besides, I can handle matters like this if I have enough prep time."

The Naiad Fairy didn't argue with her Host's words. She wasn't wrong, after all.

"Still... it's a shame..." She murmured, watching the gory sight all around.

A lingering sound of regret dwelled in the Naiad Fairy's voice. As if that wasn't enough proof that she really wanted to get in on the action, the little thing made a point and crossed her arms.

"Relax, Rhea. We'll be having so much fun together, researching the specimen I retrieved. Wouldn't that be fun?"

The Familiar seemed to be wavering a little upon hearing about the research. It was true that she preferred stuff like that to violence.

"Well, you have a point..." The cute Naiad Fairy finally blurted out.

Her compensation for being a spectator in the earlier fight would be none other than research. It was a fair deal.

"But, don't you think it was risky? Handling things on your own. What if the Demon Lord exceeded your expectations?"

Ana shrugged slightly upon hearing the question.

"I would have retreated. In the first place, this Warehouse was created to trap enemies inside."

"That's true. You could escape and leave the enemy here..." Rhea murmured.

"Right? In the first place, the Device placed here isn't the real deal. It's just an illusion we made with your Bond Magic." Ana grinned at the Naiad Fairy.

"Well, anyhow... we got what we wanted, didn't we? Will you be reporting this to Neron, Aloe, and Maro? Or do they not need to know?"

The young girl smiled to herself and looked above her. Her eyes appeared to have spotted something since she squinted, but she didn't lose her composure.

"Something tells me they are already aware..."

Even though Ana never outrightly said so, the main reason she was so confident in her victory was that her comrades were on standby.

If she was in danger, Ana was certain that Neron would swoop in to resolve the scenario.

'Well, that would mean I'll get reprimanded, so I was looking forward to resolving things on my own...'

Even though Jared had told Ana that the Demon Lord was Neron's prize, she couldn't help herself from being interested in the being.

"I solved the puzzle, so it's mine by right... don't you think so too, Rhea?"

"Yeah, sure."

Both of them were of like mind, so it was already a given that they would support each other's choices.

"We should start cleaning things up and—"

>CREAK<

The entrance opened and three people stepped into the room.

"Is it over?"

"Sheesh, this place is a mess."

"You just had to go on with your crazy plan."

The three individuals who had just appeared were none other than her respected colleagues and seniors.

"Neron, Maro, Vida. You're here already?" Ana laughed awkwardly.

"Don't pretend like you didn't notice we were already close by. I knew you'd pull a stunt like this." Neron sighed and shrugged, looking around him to spot the mess in the room.

"A-ah, don't worry, I'll have it cleared in no—"

Raising an index finger, Neron silenced Ana before she could complete her words.

A brimming light danced atop his hand and then, every body part of Lydia started resonating with the energy he released.

"I'll clean it up for you."

>SWOOOOSH<

Blood. Bones. Flesh—every aspect of the Demon Lord—became attracted to the ball of purple light that Neron released.

Like a black hole, it sucked everything into its abyss, leaving not a speck left of the deceased Lydia.

"There you have it," Neron spoke calmly, returning his gaze to his colleagues.

At this point, Aloe Vida was pulling the ears of Ana while Maro reprimanded her for her recklessness.

It was a funny sight to see.

'Should I join in on the fun and pinch her cheeks too?' Neron chuckled, noting how cute his student was.

Even with his lighthearted thoughts, he couldn't escape the realization that dawned on him.

The realization of how powerful Anabelle had become.

'Even though this one is most likely suited for espionage, rather than pure combat, it doesn't change the fact that she was a Demon Lord. Ana's ability to defeat one of their leaders at such a young age... is commendable.'

Had he been underestimating her capabilities all along?

'Looks like you won the bet, Jared...'

~Of course, I did. In exchange, you know what you must do.~A voice appeared in Neron's head.

It was none other than Jared's.

'Did you really see this coming? That she would win so easily?' Neron responded, still surprised that Jared had anticipated something of this magnitude from a girl of merely fifteen years of age.

~Well, I gave her information beforehand, so she could plan ahead. If not for her preparations, as well as the environment being in her favor, things could have gone your way.~

Neron finally understood what happened. Even though Jared had made a bet with him concerning the Demon Lord Of Noir, he also reached out to Ana, making things easier for her.

'So, you gave her a fighting chance? Isn't that cheating?'

~I never said I wouldn't assist her. Besides, all I did was give her basic information. Ultimately, she came up with the strategies on her own. She's strong. Ergo... it's my win!~

Neron sighed further.

The truth was that he had been conversing with Jared via Telepathic Magic. Usually, that would be impossible with such a far distance, but Jared invented a Magic Item that made something like that achievable.

Both mentor and protege—Jared and Neron—had always been in contact even after he left the Kingdom.