

## The Witch 21

Chapter 21: Devil's Contractor

Blackmoon City, Red-light District

Earthly Pleasure Manor

While Lord Manfred perused a list of documents at his study table, a strong gust of wind suddenly blew open the room's window before a slim figure swiftly entered.

"That's a rude way to enter another person's room, don't you think, Lady Elaine? Have you finally prepared to indulge in the world of carnal pleasure?" Lord Manfred spoke casually.

"Less nonsense, Manfred. Not all witches enjoy such depraved acts," Senior Witch Elaine stated coolly as she hung her coat on the hanger and took a seat in the guest chair.

"Others might come for sexual service, but not me. You should already know that I only come for one thing—and one thing only."

"Yes, you came for my d—Ahem!" Lord Manfred gave a dry cough as Senior Witch Elaine was about to explode before he quickly corrected, "Information—You came for my information."

The Earthly Pleasure Manor was a place that provided sexual service for its clients on the surface, but it was also a secret intelligence organization that covertly gathered intel under the surface.

"Exactly. I want everything you have on demon activities in the Blackmoon Region," Senior Witch Elaine stated.

"Demon activities? This isn't the northern fronts, Lady Elaine. There isn't any demon activity in this area. The closest thing to demons would be the sighting of the Wyvern-class Abomination yesterday afternoon," Lord Manfred frowned and asked, "Why would you..."

"The City Lord's daughter was murdered, and her mana source was taken. Lord Manfred should understand the gravity of taking another witch's mana source, no? It can only be the work of a demon," Senior Witch Elaine stated firmly.

Although she knew that might not be the case, she had to make others think so and let it reach City Lord Istana's ears.

"Wyvern-class Abomination... City Lord's daughter murdered... Mana source was taken...?" Lord Manfred muttered softly in deep thoughts before he stared deeply at Elaine. "Are you certain it was the work of a demon?"

"It can only be the work of a demon," Elaine lied.

"I see. It'll take time to compile the documents. Come back tomorrow to collect the information," Lord Manfred glanced down and resumed reading his documents as if the talk was over.

Years of experience in reading people's expressions told him that the Senior Witch was not being truthful. She was not good at hiding her true thoughts.

Nevertheless, she must have some compelling reason to come and lie to him.

"Oh, and of course, don't forget to bring the gold," Lord Manfred added.

Whatever Senior Witch Elaine's reasons for coming, it did not matter as long as there was gold to be earned.

"Of course," Elaine nodded.

Just as she was prepared to leave through the window, she suddenly paused her steps and turned around to face Lord Manfred again.

"Hm? Is there something else?" Lord Manfred raised an eyebrow.

"Actually, there is," Elaine admitted and said, "I have another request. I would like you to provide me with all the information you have on a person called Vaan. More precisely, I want information about this person's life before he entered the academy."

"Vaan, you say...?" Lord Manfred showed a peculiar look before saying, "It's professional of me, but I must ask. Why do you want to know about this person's life?"

Reasons told him that his student was at the center of the recent problems in the academy.

Without understanding the complete picture, he did not intend to carelessly sell his student's information lest he harms him.

"You see, yesterday, the academy lost two geniuses," Elaine mentioned with a sad look as she sighed, "Wise Scholar Eniwse's loss was already a big blow to the academy."

"However, it wasn't until we discover her servant's study notes that we realized that the death of her servant, Vaan, was an even bigger blow for the academy. This person could have been a pioneer in the research of magic."

"Having read Servant Vaan's study notes and benefitted a great deal from it, he could be said to be half my teacher. Thus, I wanted to learn more about him," Elaine said with a regretful smile.

She had frequently heard about Servant Vaan back in the academy, but alas, she never interacted with the person.

If only she knew the person had such a great mind earlier...

"I see. In that case, please come two days later. The information on the person will be ready for you then," Lord Manfred calmly stated.

"Understood. I'll come back in two days to pick up the documents," Elaine nodded and said, "Thank you, Lord Manfred."

"No need. It's all business." Lord Manfred waved his hand for the person to leave.

Shortly after Elaine left, peace returned to the room as Lord Manfred placed down the document in his hands and leaned back on his chair with a thoughtful look.

'So my student was deemed dead, huh? He certainly didn't look like it last night,' Lord Manfred mused.

Abomination... City Lord's daughter's murder... Demons... Vaan's death... Returning to life...

Lord Manfred reviewed the information he learned as he tried to piece together the puzzle before his eyes suddenly snapped widely open at a discovery.

'A Devil's Contractor?' Lord Manfred thought.

There weren't many instances where a person could be brought back to life, but it could only be done by someone with great power if it happened.

"When the Gehenna Realm descended three hundred years ago, the seven Transcendent Witches rose to power and founded their kingdoms to defend the continent and had been at war with demons ever since..."

However, in the face of the Gehenna Realm's strongest demons, the seven Great Devils, even the seven Transcendent Witches' power paled in comparison.

If not for the Great Devils' lack of interest in dominating the world, the continent would have been overrun by demons long ago.

"It's rare for a Great Devil to show interest in a human, but if a contract is made, the contractor's life would be far from ordinary..."

Six Devil Contractors have emerged with powers rivaling Transcendent Witches since Gehenna's appearance.

It was thanks to them that the seven witch kingdoms only managed to occupy one-third of the continent.

'If a seventh contractor appears, things might become more interesting. Are you the seventh contractor, Vaan? Haiz, you could have written a bit more words before you left, you know?' Lord Manfred grudgingly thought.

## Chapter 22: City Lord Istana's Fury

### Blackmoon Academy

"Where is she?!"

City Lord Istana's thunderous roar shook the academy grounds and disturbed several ongoing classes from the very moment she arrived with an entourage of soldiers and battle witches.

"Lady Istana," Gwena greeted politely, having expected the City Lord's arrival.

She quickly guided the City Lord to the infirmary, where the crime scene was left untouched, lest the City Lord nitpick points of suspicions and wrongfully accuse the academy.

"What is this pungent stench?"

Istana frowned before she even reached the first ward as an acidic smell permeated the infirmary's hallway.

"As you know, our students are still young and green, having not experienced the baptism of blood. Several students vomited upon witnessing the gruesome sight inside the first ward," Lady Gwena explained.

Lady Istana immediately frowned and stared at her. "And you didn't bother getting people to clean it up?"

"Out of consideration for the City Lord, no. We thought it was best not to do anything that would affect the City Lord's private investigation at the crime scene."

Istana nodded after hearing Lady Gwena's explanation and said, "At least you're tactful."

Shortly after stepping over the puddles of vomit, Istana entered the first ward and laid eyes on the scene before the surrounding atmosphere became heavy as Lady Istana painfully closed her eyes.

"I'm sorry for your loss, Lady Istana." Lady Gwena stated.

"..."

After a moment of silence, Lady Istana asked, "You must have clues for me. What were the results of your own investigation?"

"According to the clues, Lady Elaine and I concluded it to be the work of a demon," Lady Gwena stated.

However, Lady Istana's shoulders quickly trembled with anger as she shot Lady Gwena a fierce glare, full of malice.

"The work of demons, you say...? Did you think I would believe that?! If there were even the slightest activity of demons within my territory, did you think I would let the rats slip into my city?!" Lady Istana thundered furiously.

The fact no one reported why her daughter was in the infirmary in the place angered her.

The academy was definitely trying to hide something from her! It may even have something to do with her daughter's murder!

Whatever the academy is hiding, she will find out what it is at all costs!

"From this point onward, my people will be conducting the investigation! The academy best cooperates and aids the investigation. Otherwise, I will view all of you as accomplices of my daughter's murderer!"

Lady Istana's harsh words made Lady Gwena frown as she replied solemnly, "Naturally, the academy will cooperate willingly so long as the City Lord doesn't push things too far and treat everyone as a criminal before verifying their innocence."

"If the students are unfairly mistreated, I will have to report everything back to Headmaster Astoria once she returns," Lady Gwena added as she stared at Istana sternly.

"Hmph, do you think you can suppress me with Headmaster Astoria's name?" Istana snorted before ordering her battle witches.

"I want documents detailing all the people my daughter had interacted with since her admission into the academy on my desk by tomorrow! Have it done immediately!"

"Yes, my Lady!" the battle witches complied with stern looks.

Sometime later, Istana wrapped her daughter's body in a layer of mana and placed her remains in a high-quality coffin she had prepared before she departed the academy.

Back in the castle, a battle witch waited for the City Lord's return.

"As per your orders, the entire city has entered a lockdown, my Lady. No one will be able to enter nor leave until it is lifted!" the battle witch reported the completion of her task.

"Good." Istana nodded with a stern look before she said, "However, that isn't enough. My daughter was murdered sometime in the evening last night. Go check whether anyone had left the city since and report back to me."

"Yes, my Lady!"

After accepting the task, the battle witch swiftly departed without hesitation and flew towards northern garrisons.

Istana was left alone in the garden with her daughter's coffin.

The atmosphere appeared peaceful and tranquil as the manservants watched their Lady stare at the coffin in silence from a distance.

However, they all knew that this was only the calm before the storm. Once the murderer is found, all hell will break loose.

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In the northern parts of the Blackmoon Region, Vaan continued to travel with the witch sisters and the Steelguard Escort Group, unaware of the brewing storm back in Blackmoon City.

"Do you really want to know?"

Once Vaan raised this question, the older sister Linette glanced back at him curiously. She really wanted to know how he earned a Senior Witch's favor.

"Yeah!" Lillias nodded energetically with intense curiosity.

"Well, it's not something to brag about. I used to work in a brothel and had a good teacher, so my pleasure skills are better than most of my peers," Vaan casually explained before asking, "Would you like to hear in detail or experience it yourself, my Lady?"

"If it's good enough to earn a Senior Witch's favor, then, of course, I would like to—"

"Hold it right there!"

Linette immediately sealed her little sister Lillias' mouth before she could finish speaking and turned her body to face Vaan directly.

"My sister is still young and a little undeveloped. Please demonstrate your skills on me instead," Linette volunteered.

"Mmf—! Mmf—!"

Lillias struggled with wide eyes as her older sister prevented her from speaking.

Her? Undeveloped? No way! She was already 18 years of age! Her body was simply still growing because she had yet to awaken her specialized magic and become a True Witch!



It was obvious that her older sister wanted to steal her opportunity!

"Ahem, it's just a simple massage." Vaan coughed wryly, wondering if the witch sisters may have misunderstood him. "Nothing too intimate. After all, this is hardly the time and place for it."

"Though if Lady Linette desires it, I can provide a better experience during our break," Vaan added.

"Ahem, I see." Linette coughed and fixed her expression before she said coolly, "We'll have to see how great your massage is first. You may use my shoulders."

"Understood, my Lady." Vaan nodded.

His calm yet piercing gaze soon fell on Linette's defenseless shoulders and fair skin after she swept her long brown hair out of the way for him...

"Mmf—! Mmf—!" Muffled noises escaped Lillias's mouth as she continued to struggle in her older sister's arms.

Chapter 23: Vaan's Discovery

"Ahhn~!"

An uncontrollable moan escaped Linette's mouth the moment Vaan's dexterous pressed into her shoulder's acupoints and stimulated her senses.

The pleasure quickly overwhelmed her and pulled her into a drunken dream of pure bliss as she relished in the feeling.

"Ooh~! Yes, right there!"

"That's the spot! Ahhn~!"

Linette's moans continued to echo as she could not put any guard against Vaan. She was completely at his mercy.

"Sister, can you not act so erotic!" Lillias complained unhappily after regaining freedom of her speech.

In her mind, she believed that her older sister was exaggerating the effect of Vaan's massage on purpose to tease her, and she was doing a pretty damn good job at it!

"Ahhh~! Yes, yes! That hit the spot~!"

Linette did not seem to have heard Lillias's complaint and continued to cry with sheer bliss and joy.

Without a doubt, she was utterly convinced of Vaan's skills.

He certainly had a miraculous pair of hands.

Each of his touches was filled with peculiar warmth that easily made her stiff shoulders relax upon contact like the melting of ice blocks with fire.

Her pores opened, and waves of mana poured into her body, causing all of her cells to scream with joy as it filled her with an immeasurable feeling of euphoria.

"Hmph, stop it!" Lillias pouted and blocked her ears.

Her sister was too much.

Not only did she rob her opportunity, but she also teased her without restraint.

At the same time, Captain Rhys and the young warriors in the escort group were filled with frowns. They were affected by the young lady's stimulation.

"Dammit, this is too much. Why does Vaan get to flirt with the ladies while we are risking our lives fighting Hellhounds?" a young warrior complained as he swung his blade at a Dark Hellhound.

Captain Rhys finished off the Dark Hellhound before he glanced over and asked, "You really want to know?"

"Yes!"

The young warriors immediately perked their ears to listen as if Captain Rhys' answer would contain some profound truth and enlightenment.

"Because it's our f\*cking job, that's what!" Captain Rhys stated.

However, his answer only made them frown deeper.

"Dammit, we all know that! I wasn't complaining about the job, Captain! We just find it unfair that Lady Linette and Lillias show such particular favor towards Vaan."

"Right? We've been traveling together much earlier. Why hadn't the two ladies shown interest in any of us?"

The young warriors all wondered the same thing once the question was raised.

If any of them could become the servants of witches from noble households, they could easily escape the tough and dangerous life of an escort.

"Because you're not handsome!" Captain Rhys stated.

'F\*ck!'

The young warriors all cursed in their minds.

The captain was also too much.

Not handsome... Not handsome... How could the captain say such a thing? Whose side was he on exactly?

"People weren't born equal. If you're ugly, then just suck it up. I don't feel good either, but it is what it is," Captain Rhys grumbled and said, "I will request for a short break later. So we can all take that chance to find a bush to beat our meat and release some steam."

The young warriors could only grumble silently and continue with their job.

"Alright, drain the Hellhound's blood like we practiced and return to Lady Linette's side to continue our escort," Captain Rhys ordered.

Although the flaws of the misdirection method had been pointed out, they still needed to use it as they had no other means of covering their trace of smell.

That was something they could only prepare on the next escort.

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Vaan gradually decreased the intensity of his skillful massage before Lady Linette regained her sense of reasoning.

"That's enough. You have certainly proven your skills," Lady Linette stated calmly.

"Yes, my Lady."

Vaan retracted his hands without hesitation.

Although Lady Linette appeared to be composed and calm, her flushed cheeks revealed her apparent embarrassment.

Even so, Linette was extremely shocked inside her heart.

Vaan's pleasure skill was so high that it was terrifying. If she hadn't forced herself to end the massage, she would have eventually thrown herself at him.

"Then... it's my turn now, right?"

Lillias' eyes brightened immediately after her older sister's massage ended as she quickly made her request.

"Quick, Vaan! Do me too!"

"Do you, huh? You should be careful with your words, my Lady."

Vaan smiled humbly.

"No fooling around, Lillias. You'll get your chance later," Lady Linette chided before adding, "We have already caused enough trouble for the escorts."

'We? We?! What do you mean, we!' Lillias gritted her teeth.

She immediately wanted to throw a tantrum, but she was quickly pulled into Linette's sisterly embrace and suffocated in between Linette's voluptuous white peaks.

'Kuh...! Ca-can't breathe...!'

Lillias' eyes began to roll back as she struggled for air.

Seeing Linette's smile as she put her little sister to sleep with all her love and care, Vaan felt like she was actually pretty terrifying in her own way.

"My little sister can be a bit mischievous at times, but she's a good girl. It's just that sometimes, she is too energetic and needs to sleep."

"I see..."

Vaan wondered if Linette was what people call a 'Yandere.'

However, he noticed there was a trace of sadness in Linette's eyes when she gazed at her little sister's sleeping face.

'How strange...' Vaan thought.

The peculiar discovery made him curious, causing him to take a glance at Lillias' body with his Magic Vision.

'This is...'

Vaan's gaze immediately sharpened with greater focus.

Lillias's mana veins and magic circuit did not appear normal like everyone else. There were multiple points of disconnections in the lines formed by mana.

'A broken magic circuit?' Vaan concluded.

Although there are cases of witches being born innately with broken magic circuits and disconnected mana veins, such disabilities are usually either self-inflicted or caused by others.

Nevertheless, Vaan decided to keep his silence.

While the two witch sisters were part of the more reasonable group of witches and treated him with respect, it wasn't his place to poke his nose into their business.

He couldn't help them even if he wanted to.

Furthermore, showing excessive interest in the matter would only invite doubts and distrust.

Chapter 24: No Rest for the Wicked

"Lady Linette, we have covered quite a fair bit of distance tonight," Captain Rhys informed before making a request, "Please permit us to take a short break before continuing the journey."

"I will allow it," Linette gave a brief glance at Vaan before she agreed with the escort captain's request.

Although Vaan was surveying the region and didn't face Linette directly, he sensed her short stare and felt she had other intentions for her agreement.

His lips slightly curved into a smile.

"Thank you, my Lady." Captain Rhys saluted with appreciation before returning to his men.

Not long after the Earth Salamander paused its large steps, Captain Rhys and the rest of the escort group surveyed the nearby area before picking out the most suitable rock pillar for their rest.

The two wagons of goods were left at the bottom before the escort group hurled their grappling hooks over the rock pillar and began their climb.

After Linette unsummoned her familiar, she used a simple wind spell to fly onto the top of the rock pillar with Lillias on her back.

Shortly after, she glanced down at Vaan on the bottom before asking, "Do you need a hand to get up?"

"No, my Lady." Vaan shook his head and replied, "I'll be fine getting up on my own, but thank you for offering."

Nevertheless, Vaan did not scale the rock pillar immediately.

He made his way over to Captain Rhys by the wagons before tapping him on the shoulder to catch his attention.

"Hm? You need something from me?" Captain Rhys asked.

"No, rather I have something to give you." Vaan picked out one of his small pouches before passing it over to the escort captain. "The odorless powder inside this pouch is capable of erasing any smell by sprinkling some of its over the target."

"Seriously?" Captain Rhys accepted the pouch with surprise.

"Yes, I have no reason to be pulling a prank on you." Vaan casually nodded and said, "And I'm sure that you know what to do with it."

"Of course! If this works exactly as you say, then this is some quality stuff. We'll be able to save some energy with this! Let me test it right away!" Captain Rhys said with amazement.

He began calling the young warriors back down from the rock pillar before they pitched up a small camp around it and covered everything with bushes, dry branches, leaves, and dirt, whatever they could find in the area to mask their location.

Two Hellhounds attacked them during the setup, but after Captain Rhys sprinkled the powder around the small, fifteen minutes quickly passed without another attack.

"Hahaha, this is some amazing stuff, Vaan! No wonder why you were confident in traveling alone!" Captain Rhys exclaimed with hearty laughter as he roughly patted Vaan on the back.

Vaan's expression slightly grimaced with each rough pat.

Rough pats from a Rank 2 Aura Master were painful, to say the least, but it wasn't at a level he couldn't endure.

"Where did you get something like this?"

"I made it myself."

Vaan was casual with his answer, but it only made Captain Rhys even more astonished after hearing it.

"For real? Just how talented are you? I've almost forgotten how long it's been since I've met another man with your level of knowledge," Captain Rhys commented with praise.

While it appeared that Vaan was talented in multiple fields, it all stemmed from the cultivation of knowledge.



Nevertheless, it was true that there weren't many educated and knowledgeable men in the vicinity of the seven witch kingdoms.

"Well, I can't say that's surprising," Vaan smiled lightly and said, "While the Kingdom of Black Rose doesn't have any laws that forbid men from studying, their statuses don't really give them easy access to books for them to learn either."

All texts with knowledge have been deemed sacred since the emergence of witches and locked behind libraries to protect them.

After all, the cumulation of knowledge was vital to a witch's accomplishment in magic.

"That's true." Captain Rhys agreed with a nod and added, "The status of men is very low in the territory of the seven witch kingdoms. It's not easy to gain access to books without good connections."

As the two chatted for some time, Vaan noticed Captain Rhys had something on his mind.

It was not difficult for him to guess that it had something to do with the odorless powder's production method.

Captain Rhys couldn't find the right moment to ask and eventually lost his opportunity to ask when Lady Linette suddenly called for Vaan.

"Vaan, if you don't mind, I would like to continue our discussion. I'm very interested in exchanging knowledge with a learned man like you," the person spoke from the top of the rock pillar.

"Of course, my Lady. It would be my pleasure," Vaan answered before informing Captain Rhys of his leave. "Since the lady calls, I shouldn't keep her waiting."

"Un, go on." Captain Rhys nodded.

However, his disappointment was clear.

Vaan smiled and decided to leave some parting words for the escort captain to ponder on.

"The production of odorless powder does not require a high degree of mastery in alchemy, nor is its recipe overly complicated and demanding. If you can recall all the information recorded on Horned Rabbits in the Beast Encyclopedia, it shouldn't be hard to come up with a basic product."

"Horned Rabbits... Beast Encyclopedia..." Captain Rhys muttered before his eyes brightened and offered Vaan his sincere thanks. "I have benefited greatly from your generous words. Thank you, Vaan."

Vaan casually waved his hand at Captain Rhys without looking back.

The northern half of the Blackmoon Region was the Dark Hellhound's habitat, but they were not the only beasts to roam the area.

Rock Worms and Horned Rabbits also lived in the area, but they were never on Vaan's list of concerns.

They were simply not a threat.

Even without the Beast Encyclopedia, the Steelguard Escort Group should have a great understanding of the beasts that lived in the Blackmoon Region.

On the rock pillar, Vaan noticed Linette's personal tent had been set up, occupying most of the space.

The lady had been waiting for him by the edge.

Vaan smiled before inquiring politely, "What would you like to talk about, my Lady?"

"That... Actually, I would like you to continue from where we left off inside my tent," Linette requested with a slight blush.

However, that slight blush quickly turned into a crimson flush, and her heart palpitated nervously with anxiety and anticipation.

She wasn't normally like this.

Nevertheless, her meaning couldn't have been clearer as Vaan understood where she was heading with her request.

"Of course, my Lady. With honor," Vaan lowered his head with a gentlemanly bow, hiding his wide smile from Linette's point of view.

It had been one of his objectives on the trip.

He wasn't going to waste the opportunity to improve himself and build a closer connection with someone heading in the direction of the kingdom's capital.

'No rest for the wicked, huh?' Vaan silently mused.

Chapter 25: Delarosa Household

The young warriors relieved their frustrations in nearby bushes one by one before they buried their pungent discharges and returned to the small camp.

It did take long before they noticed their captain sitting by himself with a frown, lost in thought.

"Captain, aren't you going to relieve yourself?" a young warrior asked.

"No, I have something more important to figure out," Captain Rhys said with a deep frown.

Vaan told him it wouldn't be difficult to figure out, but it wasn't easy at all.

No matter how he wrapped his head around it, he could not figure out what part of a Horned Rabbit was needed to make the odorless powder.

Perhaps, their perception of 'not difficult' was completely different?

"Come, take a seat around me. I'll be borrowing your minds for a bit."

Captain Rhys dragged the closest young warrior to sit beside him before the others joined in and formed a circle with puzzled looks.

"What could be more important than shooting dragon fire?" a young warrior asked.

Awakening the dragon and releasing the pent-up fire in one's loins... It was a simple metaphor understood by everyone.

"Shooting dragon fire can be saved for another day." Captain Rhys shooed the young warrior with his hands before saying, "I need more brainpower to figure out something that can improve the group's escort missions."

"You should have all experienced the effectiveness of the odorless powder. Supposedly the secret to manufacturing it lies in Horned Rabbits," Captain Rhys stated.

However, the young warriors were immediately dumbfounded as if a confusion spell had been cast on them.

"Horned Rabbits? Horned Rabbits are the Dark Hellbound's main prey in the Blackmoon Region. How could they have anything to do with producing the odorless powder?"

"Right? If Horned Rabbits could erase their smell, they wouldn't be such easy prey for the Dark Hellhounds. Is there some sort of mistake, Captain?"

Faced with everyone's stare, Captain Rhys shrugged his shoulders.

"How the f\*ck would I know? It's what Vaan told me," Captain Rhys stated before adding, "And it involves alchemy. You know what alchemy is like. It's something that can even turn sh\*t into something tasty."

His vulgar words immediately made several young warriors express their disgust.

"...Seriously?"

"Well, I don't really know if it's true or not, but that's what I heard about alchemy," Captain Rhys replied.

Everything was up to their own belief.

"Ugh, regardless of the truth, I don't think I can accept any food offered by alchemists in the future," a young warrior revealed the urge to vomit.

Curse his imagination for being too vivid.

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Vaan was oblivious to the escort group's difficulty despite being handed such a simple handwork.

At the very least, he thought it was simple.

The heavens never close all doors to life – Vaan always felt that this saying was especially true.

But if one lacked the knowledge, they would not be able to see the doors.

The Blackmoon Region's northern path had always been difficult for ordinary people to traverse due to the Dark Hellhounds.

Very little knew that the Horned Rabbit's horn was the solution for safer passage through the northern road.

In order to produce an odorless powder capable of erasing smell, the escort group would need to grind the horn down into powdered form and mix it with the verdant grass eaten by Horned Rabbits.

But even if the Steelguard Escort Group completed this step, the quality would still be inferior to what he made.

The basic rule of survival is to never reveal one's treasures, lest it invites greed and calamity upon oneself.

The Steelguard Escort Group had been suspicious of his ability to travel alone.

He had successfully erased the last bit of doubt by simply giving away some soup he did not care about and even letting them think it was a treasure, earning their goodwill in the process.

And by doing this, he would have less to worry about getting backstabbed in the events of dangerous situations on the trip.

At the very least, the escort group would not try to throw him out as bait for their escape if it ever reached such a situation.

Furthermore, he gave the Steelguard Escort Group the chance to open up the odorless powder market, but he will be the one making bigger profits when he introduces the higher-quality odorless powder.

It was all calculated.

When Vaan entered Linette's tent, he spotted Lillias sleeping soundly in one corner, but more importantly, the inside of the tent was very luxurious.

Silk mattresses, gold oil lanterns, accessories, jewels...

No matter where Vaan looked, everything screamed of money. They were all high-end goods that were further enchanted by magic to enhance their various functions.

This level of wealth was something that only the upper-class noble households could possess.

"If there's something you like, I can gift it to you," Lady Linette promised.

Vaan peeled his eyes away from the shimmering gold and shook his head with a smile.

"Surely, it comes with a condition. Right, Lady Linette? The eldest daughter of the Delarosa Household?" Vaan presumed.

The Delarosa Household was one of the leading noble households with the nobility rank of Marquis in the Kingdom of Black Rose. The head of Delarosa was a powerful High Witch who achieved High Awakening.

Linette could not hide her surprise when Vaan made his guess correctly.

"I don't remember introducing my family name to anyone in the escort group. So how did you know?" Linette inquired suspiciously.

"When you work in a brothel, all sorts of rumors and words fly around. There aren't many True Witches in the kingdom that have an Earth Salamander familiar and carry this degree of wealth. The tent itself is also a priceless spatial treasure that—"

"Alright, I've heard enough," Linette suddenly interrupted with a finger pressed on Vaan's lips, dropping the topic there and then.

She was quickly convinced that he didn't know her identity prior to their meeting and only found out through his own speculation.

"I would like to continue with the massage now."

"Of course, my Lady."

Lady Linette seemed to have regained her confidence and composure.

But after Vaan laid her down on the soft mattress, her heart palpitated, and her face flushed before he even started.

Her reaction was no doubt that of an unplucked flower.

Chapter 26: Earth-Attribute Mana

"Your first time?" Vaan casually asked, despite knowing the answer.

Linette quietly nodded.

From the redness of her cheeks, the tremors of her shoulders, and flutters of her eyelashes, Vaan could understand her nervousness.

As someone who once worked in a brothel, it was his role to erase that nervousness and provide only comfort and security to his partner.

"Take it easy. I'll start with a massage to relax your body," Vaan stated.

Shortly after, he warmed his hands and commenced his massage.

"Mmm."

A soft moan escaped her lips.

Starting from her neck down to her shoulders, arms, chest, body, legs, and feet, the warmth of Vaan's hands intertwined with the coolness of Linette's tender skin.

The clash of two opposing temperatures did not repel but revolved around each other like a whirlpool, perfectly blending to produce a miraculous feeling of harmony like the duality of Yin and Yang.

The comfort made her muscles relaxed, and soon, her breathing became steady and calm.

The first step was completed.

Vaan proceeded to massage her acupoints and aroused her sensual pleasure, opening her pores and drawing in the mana to enhance and enjoy their experience.

With rosy cheeks, eyes filled with charm, and beads of sweat that smelt like the budding lavenders ready to bloom in mild summers, Linette's previous nervousness was but an illusion.



She was ready to accept him.

Without wasting his breath on superfluous words nor confirmation of her heart's desire, Vaan pulled the lace on her gown and undressed her body before undressing himself.

Soon, Vaan held her slim waist and embraced her bare body.

They felt the radiating heat of their bodies intertwined and the soft thumping of their heartbeats as they stared into each other's eyes, wanting to peer into the starry night of their souls.

Not long after, their bodies connected, and the soft cry of a blossoming flower echoed from the tent of passion.

"Ahhh~!"

...

...

...

A few hours later, the escort group still had not resumed their journey.

The impatient young warriors pranced back and forth around their small campfire as they wondered what to do with bloodshot eyes.

"Argh, this is killing me," a young warrior scratched his head with frustration and asked, "How much longer do we have to wait?"

"Until Lady Linette and Lady Lillias are ready to depart," Captain Rhys answered with his eyes closed and legs crossed in seated meditation as if he was trying to achieve zen.

The moans that followed after the initial cry filled everyone with rich imaginations and nearly drove them crazy.

They either endured with an indomitable spirit and heart of steel or gave in to their inner demons and f\*cked the ground, f\*cked the trees, or f\*cked with their hands.

The breathless dragon that they managed to suppress awakened with a greater fire.

"Ugh, I can stand it anymore. Someone get them to stop," a young warrior laid defeatedly on the ground.

The two people trapped in their little world of passion had no compassion nor consideration for those outside of it.

"If you want to die, you can intrude on their session and ask them directly," Captain Rhys stated.

The young warrior immediately cowered at that choice.

"I'm good. I haven't lived long enough yet..."

"But how are you fine, Captain?"

After the question was raised, the rest of the young warriors were curious how their captain was faring so much better.

"You really want to know?"

"Yes!"

The young warriors answer.

"Take a deep breath and breathe out slowly, then repeat after me; inner peace..." Captain Rhys instructed without exiting his closed-eye meditation.

"Fuu... Inner peace..."

"Fuu... Inner peace..."

The young warriors repeated again and again, but they couldn't calm down the raging fire in their loins whenever Lady Linette's voice echoed into their ears like devilish whispers of a succubus.

Their eyes became bloodshot once more.

"Argh, I can't do—"

Swish~!

Everyone suddenly sensed a surge of mana rushing into the area like a gust of wind just before a young warrior could finish his complaint.

Captain Rhys's eyes snapped open before he glanced up at the top of the rock pillar with surprise.

"That was..."

"An advancement."

Captain Rhys stated without a shred of doubt as the young warriors wondered.

Not long after, the noise coming from the tent at the top of the rock pillar finally died down into silence, freeing the escort group from the mental torture.

"Finally, it's quiet now."

...

...

...

Ding!

<You have completed an unassigned Subjugation-type Witch Hunt>

<You have obtained the target's primal essence and earth-attribute mana>

<Calculating appropriate rewards...>

<...>

Vaan quietly listened to the system alerts as he lay in bed with Linette in his arm, covered by a thin sheet of blanket.

He casually swiped a few strands covering her face before she grumbled from the slight tingling sensation and readjusted her body into a more comfortable position.

The Delarosa Household was a behemoth in the Kingdom of Black Rose.

If Vaan could borrow their prestige and connection, meeting and interacting with other noble households in the kingdom's capital would be easier.

As he thought about visiting the capital after accomplishing his present goals, Vaan steadily formed a plan to grow his strength efficiently.

The capital was a place thriving with talents and powerful witches.

It was the best place to grow.

...

"What's on your mind?" Linette took the initiative to ask while drawing circles on his chest boldly and playfully.

After experiencing a steamy session together, she radiated with maturity and confidence.

The flower bloomed beautifully.

Vaan hid his true thoughts and replied with a smile, "I just thought whether it was fine for you to give your first time to someone you just met?"

"Oh?"

Linette was immediately intrigued by his question.

It was not something a normal man living in a witch kingdom would ask.

"All women are bound to lose it at some point. It's not something precious, yet men treat it like so when choosing their partners, putting such heavy expectations and unnecessary pressure on women to keep their chastity and forcing them to behave and act certain ways. Are you also someone like that?"

Ding!

<The rewards have been calculated>

The system suddenly alerted before Vaan could answer.

Chapter 27: Special Mission

<Based on the lump of refined mana with earth attributes extracted from the True Witch, a list of suitable rewards is available>

<Please select one of the following rewards>

<Option 1: Reinforce the body with earth-attribute refined mana and increase outer body defense by 3 points>

<Note: There is a small chance of developing a defense-type talent>

<Option 2: Reinforce the five organs with earth-attribute refined mana and increase their defense by 2 points>

<Note: There is a small chance of developing a defense-type talent>

<Option 3: Reinforce a single limb with earth-attribute refined mana and increase its defense by 6 points>

<Note: There is a small chance of developing a defense-type skill>

<Option 4: Feed the earth-attribute refined mana to the Heaven-Swallowing Space and expand its subspace>

<Note: There may be unexpected gains or nothing at all>

...

Looking at the list of rewards, Vaan could clearly see that the earth-attribute refined mana was centered around improving the body's defense.

At the same time, he drew some conclusions after seeing the reward list for the third time; the system lists the rewards in order, based on what it deems to be the best to last choice.

However, the fact that he still has the freedom to choose implies that the system's choice isn't absolute.

For example, the first choice is the best choice for his growth, but it might not necessarily be what he needs most if he encounters an urgent or dangerous situation.

The system exists to assist him, not control him.

It was reassuring to think like that.

Vaan's eyes flickered.

He had already made his choice, but there was no need to choose a reward immediately.

The system will save the lump of mana from being swallowed by the Heaven-Swallowing Space until he makes his choice.

'What about the primal essence?' Vaan thought.

Ding!

< The system has issued you an objective mission>

<Objective mission: Collect 5 True Witch-level primal essences>

<Upon completion of the mission, you will be able to awaken a True Witch-level specialized magic>

'Specialized magic!'

Vaan was amazed by the completion reward.

As long as a witch understood the logic and spell formula, the witch was capable of performing all types of magic.

Despite that, a witch's most frequently used spell will always be the specialized magic they awaken upon becoming a True Witch.

This is because not only is specialized magic the strongest magic in a witch's arsenal, but it is also akin to an extension of their limb.

It could be invoked at will.

Vaan did not expect that he, a man, would also get the opportunity to perform the same feats as the witches.

'Primal essence... Primal essence... Basically, I need to pop more cherries...' Vaan concluded.

The mission was neither too difficult nor too easy.

Most newly awakened True Witches were at the age of adulthood, but there were also many promiscuous young witches who lost their innocence before reaching adulthood.

Nevertheless, finding True Witches who kept their virtue isn't too difficult.

He only had to worry about enticing them.

...

"Well? Do you not have an answer for me?" Linette felt mildly disappointed after not receiving a reply from Vaan.

"Apologies, my Lady." Vaan smiled apologetically before saying, "Of course, I believe that women have every right as men to do whatever they want and love whoever they want."

What a joke.

His entire path to power requires intimate contact with witches.

They were his mana sources.

If they were still had the same reservations as the women in the past, only saving their chastity for after marriage, wouldn't he suffer?



He was bound to have relationships with many witches and not be tied down by one in this life.

"I see. That's good," Linette gave a half-smile.

She found his response unsatisfactory.

Nevertheless, Vaan sensed her dissatisfaction and stroked her hair before adding, "We can't always expect people to fall in love with the right person the first time. Thus, it is ridiculous for people to judge unchaste women without understanding their stories."

"It is also unfair for widowed women to remain single for the rest of their life because they are viewed as unlucky and unwanted potential marriage partners. Nevertheless, I was speaking for the past."

"Times have changed. Witches' lifespans far outstrip men, and they wield unfathomable power that men cannot. It would be weird to uphold the same values and beliefs from 300 years ago."

"Right? I totally agree!" Linette smiled after hearing what she wanted to hear before suddenly saying, "Still, I hope you don't see me as some loose woman. I don't do this with just anyone."

"I would never, my Lady."

Vaan lightly smiled before he continued to enjoy the softness of her body as she rested her head on his chest and shared their bodies' warmth.

They enjoy a short moment of serene silence together.

"Say... What are your plans for heading north? Are you going to visit the capital?" Linette suddenly broke the silence with a curious question.

Vaan sensed the hope and expectance in her tone before he replied, "I do plan to visit the capital and settle down there, but not right away. I have some plans along the way, so it will take some time before I reach the capital."

"I take it that Lady Linette is heading to the capital?" Vaan asked shortly after.

"Mm." Linette nodded.

After hesitating for a moment, she asks, "I know this is selfish of me to ask but is it possible for you to drop your plans and come with me?"

"No," Vaan flatly replied.

"Oh..."

Linette was disappointed in his reply.

If it were another witch, they would have surely dragged him along regardless of his wishes and intention.

"However, it would be great if you could write me a recommendation letter, so it would be easier for me to find you once I reach the capital."

"Of course!"

"Ugh... My head..."

Just as Linette replied with newfound happiness, Lillias woke up with a complaint, causing her to glance over.

She was immediately startled to see some white smudges on her little sister's cheeks, which prompted her to rush over and wipe it immediately.

"Hehe."

Lillias smiled foolishly under her big sister's sudden loving care when her nose suddenly twitched and triggered her frown.

"What is that smell..."

## Chapter 28: Dangerous Situation

When Lillias noticed Vaan and Linette's bare bodies, her mind immediately drew an assumption before she froze in the next moment.

The lingering scent of Vaan and Linette's passion session pervading the tent, in addition to Linette's panic in wiping her face, it could not mean...

"Big sister... You're too much. How could you...do that in that in the same tent I was sleeping! Do you have any consideration for your little sister?"

While hammering Linette's shoulders with two small fists, Lillias complained, feeling aggrieved that the person she was eyeing got eaten by her sister.

"It was my bad, alright? I'll make it up to you when we reach the capital," Linette tried to soothe her little sister, but Lillias responded with a pout.

"Hmph!"

Seeing how her sulky little sister was so cute, Linette could not help but pull Lillias' head and embrace it in her bosom.

Alas...

"Ahh!"

Linette suddenly yelped.

She immediately separated Lillias from her before she glanced down and noticed a bite mark on her twin mounds.

"D-did you just bite me...? Now, I'm mad!"

"Bleh~!" Lillias poked her tongue and said, "I was seeing if I can still savor the lingering secondhand taste."

"You..." Linnette was speechless.

After a moment, she could not help but sigh before saying, "I know you're very interested in matters between men and women since you just hit adulthood, but you should know better about the condition of your body better than anyone else..."

"I know, I know. I cannot stimulate my body, but I can still get excited, can't I?!" Lillias' eyes brightened in the next moment before pushing Linette aside, "Move, sister. I don't get in the way of my eye candy."

Lillias ogled at Vaan's bare body as he poised on the bed like some male supermodel while looking her way.

"Now, now. Don't get too excited," Vaan smirked at the two sisters while feeling fascinated by their interesting sister interaction.

Puchi!

Lillias was dealt critical damage and felt blood rushing to her nose before she covered her nosebleed.

"Vaan!"

"Uh-oh, I'm in danger."

Vaan slightly chuckled after seeing Linette's glare, but it was more serious than he thought as Linette dragged him outside the tent shortly after they dressed.

"Didn't you see my sister wake up?" Linette asked with a frown, "Why didn't you dress right away?"

"I was trying to deepen my connection with nature," Vaan casually teased.

"You..." Linette was ready to explode.

However, Vaan hugged her from behind while holding onto her crossed arms before he said, "Jokes aside, why are you so angry at me, my Lady?"

"How can I not?! You can just shoot that stuff on my sister's sleeping face!" Linette gritted her teeth and warned, "Don't you know that if I were any other witch, I would have put you to death for disgracing my sister!"

"What I'm trying to say is you can't act this blatant once you reach the capital. Otherwise, you will get yourself killed..." Linette shortly added with a softer tone.

"Now, now. You are falsely accusing me, my Lady. I was busy filling up the love jar. Where would I have the time to spray my seeds of life elsewhere? My Lady, you have mistaken Lady Lillias's drool for something else." Vaan explained.

He didn't find it surprising for Lillias to drool in her sleep.

That girl was a bit perverted, and they were making love beside her, which fed her smell and hearing and allowed her to have a sweet dream.

Linette was embarrassed and deeply ashamed after learning the truth.

"I'm sorry for accusing you, Vaan... I'm not very experienced in determining the difference between —"

Rumble...!

Before Linette could finish apologizing, they both heard a sudden impact on the far eastern side of the Blackmoon Region.

Rumble...! Rumble...!

This time, two powerful impacts came from the far western side.

The commotion alarmed the entire escort group, and even Lillias rushed outside to investigate.

Still, no one could see what was happening in the dark of the night beyond a certain distance after gathering together to check.

They could only see the vague shadows of the distant cliffs' edges due to the moonlight but nothing else below that.

"What's going on? What were those impacts? I could even feel the slight tremors from here!" Lillias exclaimed.

"It sounded like something powerful just struck the cliffs on both sides, but it's too dark to tell or see."

"It must be quite far," Captain Rhys assumed before adding, "Judging by the distance we covered, it should be quite close to Blackmoon City."

"Close to Blackmoon City? Is the city under attack? Should we head back?" a young warrior questioned with surprise.

As the other young warriors wondered the same, Vaan simulated scenarios in his mind before arriving at a terrible conclusion.

"No! We can't go back! We need to get out of Blackmoon Region as soon as possible!" Vaan suddenly shouted at everyone, "Pack everything and let's go! The entire northside is going to become hell for everyone outside the city walls!"

Captain Rhys and the others were taken aback by Vaan's urgency before he asked, "What kind of situation are we in for it to cause you such fright?"

"The worst kind!" Vaan replied gravely. "I'll explain further on the way. But, for now, we need to move quickly!"

"Alright. We'll do as Vaan says."

Linette voiced her consent after Captain Rhys turned to her for her opinion.

Everyone immediately departed shortly after the escort group packed their belongings into their wagons, and Linette summoned her Earth Salamander.

It didn't take long before countless howling hellhounds rippled throughout the entire north side region.

"Vaan, explain to me clearly. What sort of dangerous situation are we in?" Linette inquired with a solemn expression beside him.

"Someone purposely struck the cliff walls to lure out the Dark Hellhounds lurking inside the cliff caves with the intent of harming everyone traveling through the northside. It won't be long before the entire north side becomes filled with enraged Dark Hellhounds roaming about," Vaan explained.

And the Dark Hellhounds won't just simply be roaming. They'll be looking for blood to spill.

Even worse, there will be many Rank-2 or even a Rank-3 Dark Hellhound among them!

Vaan had seriously underestimated City Lord Istana's madness.

## Chapter 29: Assembly of Silent Night

### Blackmoon City

Some time ago, a battle witch returned to the city lord's castle and reported, "Eartha here, ready to report some findings regarding Lady Isabelle's death!"

Boom!

The wooden door to the city lord's office splintered apart as City Lord Istana stormed and shot the battle witch a fierce look.

"Speak! What have you found out?" City Lord Istana questioned.

"Yes, my Lord!" Eartha answered before reporting her findings, "During the day, Lady Isabelle killed Senior Witch Eniwse's servant and caused her berserk transformation, leading to Lady Isabelle nearly getting killed on the spot."

"Fortunately, Senior Witch Gwena arrived in a timely manner and saved Lady Isabelle with her healing magic before sending Lady Isabelle to the infirmary for further recovery."

"This subordinate's investigation led this subordinate to look further into the servant that Young Lady Isabelle had killed. This servant was called Vaan, and he was very popular among the students for his pleasure skills."

"However, this subordinate found it strange that his body would be dumped in the wasteyard instead of receiving a proper burial when so many young witches favor him. Thus, when this subordinate went to check the wasteyard, there was nothing to be found."

"There was no body, no waste, no nothing. Everything in the wasteyard had been cleared, which normally happens once every month or two. But, according to the students' testimonies, they also found it strange that the wasteyard was cleaned a few days ahead of schedule."

"This subordinate found this point to be especially suspiciously. It was as if the academy had purposely pushed forward with the waste removal schedule to remove the evidence. Thus, this subordinate couldn't confirm if the servant is dead with this subordinate's own eyes."

After the battle witch finished her report, City Lord Istana silently contemplated.

"There should be any witch brave enough to devour another witch's mana source. However, it's a different story if a devouring spell was inscribed on a weapon of murder. Then, anyone would have been able to use it to kill my daughter—even if it's a supposedly weak servant."

City Lord Istana's expression darkened as she arrived at this point.

"My Lord, I was told that Servant Vaan is a witch descendant," the battle witch mentioned before saying, "However, according to the testimonies, his body is far below the standard strength of other witch descendants."

"Could this have been an intended disguise to hide his identity as a member of a dark organization? This subordinate can't think of anyone else who would have the courage to murder a city lord's daughter."



The battle witch made a bold assumption.

Including the seven witch kingdoms, several dark organizations existed throughout the continent.

Although their strengths and scale of operation varied, their modus operandi was all the same. Whether it was espionage, subterfuge, or assassination, they will accept any task for the right price.

"I've recently heard a rumor that the Assembly of Silent Night was active in the area," City Lord Istana mentioned before narrowing her burning gaze, "If it was their doing, then it wasn't murder but a commissioned assassination!"

City Lord Istana clenched her fists with growing fury.

"There aren't many people who can commission the Assembly of Silent Night to assassinate a city lord's daughter without paying a hefty sum and having a high status..." the battle witch frowned with doubt before wondering, "But who would do such a thing?"

Although her lord, Istana Gleriath, had a headstrong personality, which easily caused other noble witches to dislike her, it shouldn't be severe enough that they would pay a high price to have her daughter assassinated.

"Someone who must be eyeing my territory! My precious daughter got implicated because of my position! Arghh!" City Lord Istana gritted her teeth with tearful sorrows before she vowed, "I will make sure they pay, no matter who they are!"

"All the regional lords neighboring Blackmoon Region are my suspects! The Assembly of Silent Night will also pay! Even if it is just one insignificant agent from their organization, they can forget about having him back!"

"But how do you plan to catch the assassin, my Lord?" the battle witch furrowed her brows with a questioning look.

"If Servant Vaan had been a hidden chess piece the Assembly of Silent Night placed in the academy, he wouldn't stay within the city after completing the task. Instead, he would have most likely left the city during the night."

"I have my ways." City Lord Istana stated gloomily.

With a pair of black eyes that looked like they wanted to swallow everything, City Lord Istana flew out of her castle before summoning fiery fist gauntlets the size of whales and shooting them at the eastern and western cliff walls.

Boom! Boom!

The giant fiery fist gauntlets repeatedly struck the cliff walls, causing wanton destruction on the face of the cliff walls as enormous chunks of earth fell apart.

Dozens of homes by the foot of the cliffs were devastated as the entire city of Blackmoon shook and alarmed everyone.

Battle Witch Eartha quickly flew over in a hurry before crying to her lord, "My Lord, please stop this madness! You're killing your own people, and the vibration of your attack will ripple throughout the Blackmoon Region's cliffs and drive the Dark Hellhounds crazy!"

"That's is exactly what I want! If the hounds don't make such good hunting pets, why else would I keep such pests around to trouble the travelers passing through my territory?! No one can escape from the Blackmoon Region!"

City Lord Istana roared madly.

...

...

...

Awroo!

The angry howls of powerful Dark Hellhounds were heard as Vaan's group rushed to leave the Blackmoon Region.

Numerous shadowy figures could be seen drawing closer in the dark of the night.

A battle is imminent.

"Hurry, men! Abandon the wagons! They can't keep up with our pace!" Captain Rhys quickly gave the order after seeing the wagons slowing them down.

But even without the wagons, they were not much faster than the nimble hounds, and before long, they locked into battle with a group of Rank-1 Dark Hellhounds.

At that moment, Vaan stood up from his spot on the Earth Salamander and drew his twin fang daggers.

Chapter 30: Giant Physique

The crimson glimmer of the red fangs that are now his twin fang daggers immediately stood out as Vaan unsheathed them from the cloth cover under his cloak.

Ignite!

Vaan scraped the two daggers together before the tiniest of spark transformed the twin fang daggers into crimson blazes.

In that instance, an invisible pressure of intimidation quickly descended on the Rank 1 Dark Hellhounds, causing them to retreat some distance from the escort group.

Awroo!

The Dark Hellhounds weakly howled with defiance, but their trembling bodies showed clear signs of fear.

"Did you do this, Vaan?" Captain Rhys glanced back with surprise.

"Yes! The Crimson Direwolves of higher ranks has innate suppression on Dark Hellhounds of lower ranks," Vaan impatiently explained before quickly urging the group, "Now keep running and don't stop!"

"Do not fight the Hellhounds head-on and just parry or dodge their attacks to keep running! The effects of these red fangs aren't as strong as the Crimson Direwolves in the flesh!"

As Vaan explained, the suppression weakened after the initial surprise as the Rank 1 Dark Hellhounds resumed their attacks.

Even so, their ferocity, speed, and attack were reduced by half under the lingering presence of the Crimson Direwolves' red fangs.

To fully suppress a group of Rank 1 Dark Hellhounds, Vaan would need at least the red fangs of Rank 3 Crimson Direwolves.

"Amazing, to think you had something like this up to your sleeve!" Captain Rhys exclaimed with surprise.

Shortly after, he coated his entire body in a layer of red aura that extended to his sword before he easily bisected two Hellhounds with a single slash.

Vaan's gaze flickered for a brief moment.

Aura was the power produced by male witch descendants after they trained their physical bodies to the limit and caused the uncontrollable mana in their bodies to mix with their blood and spirit.

Nevertheless, exceptions always exist.

Talented Aura Masters could awaken their aura early without training their physical bodies to the limit by relying on their spirit.

Although Vaan was envious of other male witch descendants with such power, the thought only lasted briefly.

"Wait, Vaan. Don't go," Linette suddenly stopped Vaan as he was about to take the lead and deter the incoming Hellhounds ahead with his twin fang daggers.

"Let me assist them with my magic," she offered.

However, Vaan shook his head and rejected her suggestion, "Absolutely not, my Lady. You're the only True Witch in the group who can kill Rank 2 Dark Hellhounds and possibly defend against Rank 3."

"You have to conserve your mana for the critical moments if we want to have hopes of getting out of here alive," Vaan firmly stated.

"That... fine," Linette conceded before adding, "But be careful."

"I will," Vaan nodded.

It went without saying that he would.

He was putting in his weight to maximize their chances of survival, not to sacrifice himself for people that he had just met.

Swish—!

Vaan quickly took the lead beside Captain Rhys with a single dash before his sudden appearance caused the incoming hellhounds to freeze in their tracks.

That brief moment of hesitation and fear was all it took for Vaan to swipe their necks with his twin fang daggers, downing two hellhounds in an instance before taking down another two in the next.

Although none of the four hellhounds died immediately, they were all paralyzed after having the carotid arteries and the jugular veins in their necks slit by Vaan and will bleed to death very quickly.

With the quickest speed and minimal strength, Vaan executed the most efficient killing method on the run.

"What!"

Vaan awed Captain Rhys and the young warriors with his ability, and his aura-less body surprised them even more.

Aura doesn't just enhance their physical strength and attack power; it also reinforces their defense.

"Color me impressed, brother." Captain Rhys caught up to Vaan and spoke on the run, "I am utterly convinced that you can travel alone with those abilities."

"How on earth did you train your body to such a state?"

"I didn't train it," Vaan replied.

There was no point in making up an excuse that people could easily find out later.

Suddenly, Vaan dashed ahead and sliced down two more hellhounds before slowing down for Captain Rhys and the others to catch up.

"If it's not due to training, then it must be the innate divine strength of the Giants! But, man, I'm jealous." Captain Rhys sighed enviously and said, "I wished I was also born with the Giant-attribute physique."

"It is what it is. You can't fight your lineage," Vaan replied with a slight smile.

It was nice to have others making up their own assumptions based on his short and vague replies. It saved him from coming up with explanations, and he could always deny having ever said such a thing.

Nevertheless, Vaan felt a sting in his left shoulder after slitting the neck of another Rank 1 Dark Hellhound up ahead.

Its skin was slightly harder, its speed was slightly faster, and the debuff was less evident on it.

It was a Rank 1 Dark Hellhound that was closer to Rank 2.

At the same time, Captain Rhys, who was running behind, felt a few drops of blood splatter on his face before he quickly asked, "Are you alright, Brother Vaan?"

"It's fine. It is just a small nick," Vaan calmly replied.

Thanks to basic-level regeneration, the bleeding stopped in fifteen seconds before the wound disappeared in the next five minutes.

'To think basic-level regeneration already has this kind of effect. What would the higher levels be like?' Vaan wonder.

Not to mention him, even Captain Rhys and the other young warriors were also surprised.

"Innate divine strength and high regeneration... Truly the Giant-attribute physique," Captain Rhys sighed enviously again.

All male witch descendants were born with an attribute and physique based on the specialized magic of their witch parent and ancestors.

'I better use the reward before I lose a limb,' Vaan silently mused.

On the head of the Earth Salamander at the back, Lillias glanced back in the southern direction before turning to her sister.

"Sister, do you think Aunty is responsible...?" Lillias whispered.