

The Witch 291

Chapter 291: Inferiority Complex

"I see... Let's say that you can use pleasure to negate the pain," Lord Narvim accepted Vaan's claim at face value.

"However, that only reduces the patient's resistance. But from what this Lord has observed, there's no way to fix the knotted mana veins besides cutting them and reattaching them. However, witches' mana veins aren't just tied to their source of magic but also their souls."

"Thus, cutting into them would cause irreversible damage to their... No, if it's you, it doesn't matter if their souls suffer damage. You can patch them up by sacrificing some of your soul force..." Lord Narvim quickly realized Vaan's treatment process.

"I see..." Lord Narvim nodded shortly after and commented with understanding, "So that's how you pulled it off, Vaan."

Vaan slightly smiled.

"If you don't mind, I wish to begin Eniwse's treatment immediately, Your Excellency," Vaan requested before adding, "Also, rather than explaining, seeing my treatment process firsthand would be easier."

"Very well, I will inform the others to make room for you to carry out the treatment without interference," Lord Narvim agreed.

Shortly after the dragon lord approached the center with the group, the True Dragons observing the Wyvern-type Abomination with special ocular magic quickly made way.

"Lord Ninth," the True Dragons greeted with subservience as they lowered their heads.

"Make way for this Lord's valued guest. He will be conducting his treatment on the Wyvern-type Abomination. You may observe and learn from a distance, but be on your best behaviors and do not interfere with his treatment," Lord Narvim strictly instructed.

"U-Understood, Lord Ninth."

Although the True Dragons were surprised and had doubts regarding Vaan's ability, they did not raise their objections.

They retreated obediently and found their seats thirty yards away from the central cage.

"The stage is yours, Vaan," Lord Narvim informed.

"Thank you, Your Excellency."

Shortly after, Vaan left the group behind and entered the central area alone. He stopped a few feet just in front of the Wyvern-type Abomination and glanced at its restless eyes.

Although Eniwse wasn't writhing in pain due to the effects of the dragon's anesthetics, Vaan could see the mental fatigue revealed in her eyes.

Eniwse had become an Abomination for a much shorter period than Aeliana.

Thus, her mental fatigue was a clear sign that her mind hadn't been twisted by the pain and despair just yet.

"I've finally found you, Eniwse. Don't worry; I'll return you to normal soon and end your pain. But before that, you have to endure a little more. So bear with me, okay?" Vaan softly spoke to her with warmth.

At the same time, the Wyvern-type Abomination shed a single drop of tears as it stared at Vaan without blinking. IT was happy to see Vaan was still alive.

"Wruu..." the Wyvern-type Abomination let out a soft whimper-like groan.

Astoria and Aeliana watched Vaan from a distance, and they couldn't help but feel envious in their hearts. Vaan's attitude to Eniwse was completely different from how he treated them.

Although he treated them well, there was still a clear distinction between them.

Nevertheless, it was also in these rare instances that Astoria could see another side of Vaan, which made him seem not as distant as he usually portrayed himself.

'He's still a human being with emotions, after all,' Astoria thought.

'I want my Lord to look at me with the same level of affection one day,' Aeliana silently prayed while biting her lips.

She realized it was impossible to monopolize his affection. Thus, she can only settle for equal treatment. And to do that, she can't cause problems for her Lord.

...

Meanwhile, Vaan wasn't aware of Astoria and Aeliana's thoughts.

After promising to treat Eniwse and recover her former appearance, Vaan allowed the Heaven-Swallowing Space to devour all the remaining dragon fragments he had.

Ding!

<An enormous quantity of mana has been fed to the Heaven-Swallowing Space>

<The Heaven-Swallowing Space has been greatly expanded>

<The Heaven-Swallowing Space has recovered two-thirds of its lost space>

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After hearing the notification, Vaan was pleasantly surprised.

Although he knew the Thousand Fog Illusion Dragon's fragments were made of condensed mana and had a high mana value, it was still higher than he had anticipated.

If he had to convert it into mana stones, the Thousand Fog Illusion Dragon's worth would be in the several tens of thousands of low-rank mana stones.

Nevertheless, Vaan quickly shoved the miscellaneous thoughts aside and focused on the important matter; Eniwse's treatment.

Vaan took out his Rank 4 Black Sword and sterilized it with Kinetic Energy Manipulation. Then, he studied Eniwse's knotted mana veins with Omni-Sense.

After running numerous simulations in his mind, he locked onto the most efficient unknotting route, which would guarantee the surgery's completion in the shortest time.

After all, the shorter the surgery, the less pain Eniwse had to endure.

Nevertheless, he did not follow the exact same treatment process he conducted with Aeliana's case.

On the contrary, he took additional steps by taking out several Gehenna plants and crushing them into essence before mixing them to create his only anesthetics.

It was Rank 1 medicine at best, but good enough to provide some extra relief.

Afterward, he entered Lycan Transformation and smeared the anesthetics over his sterilized sword and claws.

"Trust me."

"Wruu..."

The Wyvern-type Abomination didn't resist despite the weapons in Vaan's hand.

For the following five minutes, Lord Narvim and the others watched Vaan perform surgery with rapid speed and precision.

His hands moved so fast that they became blurred, repeating the process of pleasure massage, cutting knotted mana veins, and reattaching them with his blood.

Several True Dragons strained their eyes to keep up with his hand movements; they were forced to use ocular magic.

"Eniwselia," Vaan whispered her True Name at the end of the surgery.

Under the effects of Name Bestowal, Eniwse felt instant relief as her soul recovered from the damages incurred during the treatment process.

At the same time, her Abomination form glowed with red light before her body reverted to her former human appearance, allowing the others to see what she looked like.

Aeliana immediately scrutinized Eniwse's facial features, wondering what kind of otherworldly beauty she was.

However, her gaze quickly shifted to her chest and bulged in surprise. Afterward, she glanced down at her small breasts and felt a sense of inferiority and defeat.

There's no way she could compete with Eniwse's enormous melons.

Chapter 292: Second Servant

Nevertheless, it wasn't just Aeliana who felt inferior upon seeing Eniwse's true appearance. Even Hester's lip twitched upon gazing at her huge rack.

She was curious to see what kind of beauty Eniwse was to make Vaan risk his life to enter the Thousand Fog Mountains to save her.

Although she didn't know what kind of person Eniwse was to Vaan that made her so important, she felt like she had found her answer simply by looking at the person's ungodly endowment.

"Those... aren't real, right?" Hester whispered to Aeliana with a blank look.

"I'm not sure... I've never seen them so big," Aeliana replied dumbfoundedly without shifting her gaze, "I wonder what she's been eating to grow them to such a size..."

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Meanwhile, Vaan welcomed Eniwse back with a fresh set of clothes to cover her bare, weakened body. She only took a few steps forward before falling into them.

"Welcome back," Vaan whispered as he wrapped her body up.

"Is this a dream?" Eniwse asked in a weak voice.

At the same time, she stared up at his familiar and handsome face without blinking, wanting to engrave his image into her memory for eternity.

She didn't think they would be able to meet again.

"No," Vaan calmly said.

"Prove that it's not," Eniwse doubted, but her trembling eyelashes showed clear signs of accepting the reality of their situation.

Vaan thought about giving her a slap of pain to awaken her to the 'reality,' but he ultimately smiled and gave her what she wanted: a kiss to reconfirm their bond.

Eniwse closed her eyes and savored the moment.

Time seemed to have frozen at that moment for Eniwse, but she knew they couldn't keep it up with so many eyes watching.

Nevertheless, after their lips parted, Eniwse made him a promise with conviction.

"You braved the dangers of the Thousand Fog Mountains to find me. And although I don't know what you have sacrificed and suffered to gain your present abilities, I know you did everything to save me, which isn't easy. So in this life, I dedicate myself to you."

Along with Eniwse's promise, Vaan received the system's notification.

Ding!

<You have acquired your second True Servant>

<[Overview]: A True Servant is a soul-bound being. They become your most devoted follower, completely faithful, and exist solely for your benefit. Your word is their law, and your affection is their greatest reward>

<[Effect]: You can channel mana into your True Servant to empower them directly through your soul link. Likewise, you can also draw mana from your True Servant to empower yourself>

<The True Servant tab has been updated>

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«True Servant/s»

First Servant: Aeliana Leclair

Witch Rank: Peak-stage Senior Witch (Mutated)

Battle Power: Mid-stage High Witch

First Specialized Magic: Sword of Light

Second Specialized Magic: Dryad Transformation

Elemental Affinity: Light, Wood

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Second Servant: Eniwse Godfrey

Witch Rank: Mid-stage Senior Witch (Mutated)

Battle Power: Pseudo-stage High Witch

First Specialized Magic: Earth Manipulation

Second Specialized Magic: Dragonification (Incomplete: Lacking dragon understanding)

Elemental Affinity: Earth, Fire

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Nevertheless, Vaan didn't pay too much attention to the system's notification and simply held Eniwse in his arms, feeling the warmth emanating from her body.

Her smooth skin was cool to the touch, but her internal body temperature was burning high due to the remnant effects of his blood.

"Don't think too much, and just focus on recovering your strength," Vaan said to Eniwse.

Shortly after, he brought her over to meet the dragon lord and the others, who had thoughtfully waited for them to finish their touching reunion.

"Hello, Eniwse," Lord Narvim took the initiative to greet her and said with a hint of sentimental emotion, "This Lord believes this is the first time we'll be able to hold a proper conversation. Congratulations on your recovery."

"Thank you, Your Excellency. I am indebted to you for the care you provided me," Eniwse said.

"You were aware? Then do you remember... No, never mind," Lord Narvim suddenly shook his head and said, "You've only just recovered, so you should rest. We can talk when you are better."

"There's a building to accommodate our human guests on the surface," Lord Narvim mentioned before adding, "This Lord believes Young Lady Eniwse here would much prefer the comfort of a soft cotton bed than a hard stone bed in these caves, right?"

"Anywhere is fine. Someone like me won't fuss over these things after coming back from hell, Your Excellency," Eniwse said with a weak smile, but she couldn't keep her gaze off the dragon lord.

She had this weird feeling that they had known each other for a long time, which was strange since she shouldn't have met the dragon lord for longer than a few weeks.

"I'm sorry, have we met before?" Eniwse couldn't help but ask.

"Have we?" Lord Narvim slightly smiled and said, "This Lord rarely leaves Ninth Peak, not to mention outside Thousand Fog Mountains. If we've met before, then perhaps you somehow stumbled into this land and saw this Lord when you were younger?"

"Is that so? Must have been my imagination then," Eniwse shook her head and decided not to dwell on it. She didn't have the energy to think.

At the same time, Vaan couldn't help but glance at the dragon lord's eyes.

There was a hint of sadness, warmth, and happiness in the dragon lord's eyes, like a parent looking at their long-lost child.

'It can't be that, right? What are the odds?' Vaan started to suspect.

After all, he himself was a transmigrator. Thus, there was no way that he would rule out the possibility of reincarnation.

Nevertheless, he chose to say nothing on the matter and simply introduced Astoria, Hester, and Aeliana to Eniwse.

But when it came to Aeliana's turn, there was a lack of response from her.

Stare...

Aeliana's mind was preoccupied as she clung to Vaan's other arm with a hunched back while scrutinizing Eniwse's chest area.

"Aeliana?"

"Ah? I wasn't looking!"

After hearing Vaan's call, Aeliana's figure immediately straightened like a startled cat that had just been caught doing something she shouldn't be doing.

"I didn't say anything about that..."

"Oh..."

Aeliana scratched her head awkwardly.

Chapter 293: Infinite Space, Infinite Realms

Sometime after Eniwse and the others introduced each other and became familiar, a True Dragon escorted her to the guest building to rest.

(Treat her as you would this Lord's daughter.)

(Yes, Lord Ninth.)

The True Dragon took note of the dragon lord's instruction before it took off with Eniwse.

Shortly after, Vaan and the others returned to the dragon lord's main cave before Lord Narvim summoned several marbled stone chairs for them to sit.

"Sit," Lord Narvim gestured after laying down in his designated spot. Shortly after everyone took their seats, he continued, "This Lord is aware that you all have a lot of questions, but so does this Lord."

"That said, as the host, this Lord will allow each of you to ask your questions first. This Lord will do his best to answer."

"Why don't you go first, Vaan?" Lord Narvim shortly suggested, clearly favoring him over Aeliana, Astoria, and Hester.

"Then, don't mind if I do, Your Excellency." Vaan nodded and said, "You mentioned that Soul Masters were rare, even in all of Chaos. But what exactly is Chaos, Your Excellency?"

"Chaos is everything that lies beyond the Dimensional Crack to the north of this kingdom. The place you call Gehenna only makes up an infinitely small part of Chaos. If you think the Great Devils of Gehenna are strong, then you haven't seen strong yet."

"Chaos is filled with beings far, far, far stronger than the Great Devils. For example, Lord Shura, Lord Albion, or simply the Lord of Chaos, the ultimate ruler of Chaos, is one such being," Lord Narvim mentioned.

"Gehenna is infinitely small in Chaos, you say?" Vaan's eyes flickered.

Infinity wasn't a fixed number.

Thus, Gehenna being infinitely small implied that it was constantly becoming smaller. But if that were also the case, Gehenna would become so small that it would cease to exist.

However, that didn't seem to be the case. Thus, it could only mean...

"Are you saying Chaos is expanding infinitely, Your Excellency?" Vaan asked shortly after.

"That's right. Even as we speak, Chaos is growing ever larger and forming new realms to fill the void, granting denizens of Chaos new places to explore and settle. No doubt, it's the work of the Lord of Chaos," Lord Narvim casually replied before adding, "Thus, although it is unlikely, should you ever meet the Lord of Chaos, you'd best show him your best behavior."

"It was said that the Lord of Chaos can erase you, your realm, and its entire history with a single thought. So it would be best if you always kept it in mind while exploring Chaos. The ultimate ruler of Chaos is someone beings at our level of existence cannot afford to offend."

"That said, this Lord recalls an interesting rumor. Supposedly, the Lord of Chaos originated from the human race like you all are," Lord Narvim casually mentioned.

Even the dragon lord himself cannot fathom the full extent of the Chaos Lord's power. He had only heard the stories.

"The Lord of Chaos was a human? Is it even possible for humans to obtain such strength?" Astoria uttered with disbelief.

The power to erase everything with a single thought... Such a realm of power was beyond her understanding. It sounded something that would only appear in stories.

She didn't think such a being actually existed.

"It's definitely possible. Anything is possible in Chaos," Lord Narvim assured her before adding, "However, it's not something just anyone can achieve without great destiny, luck, hard work, and imperishable will."

"You might not know this since you are not a local of Chaos, but humans are among the most dominant races in Chaos. Even Balmodon the Undying, one of the Great Devils of Gehenna, was formerly human before acquiring the Evil Wolf God's divinity," Lord Narvim mentioned.

"Still, it's hard to believe there is a human out there with the power to create a place like Chaos—"

"I will have to stop you there, High Witch," Lord Narvim suddenly interrupted Astoria before apologizing, "I'm sorry if I caused any confusion with my words."

"However, the Lord of Chaos didn't create Chaos. Chaos already existed long before the Lord of Chaos ascended his throne. The Lord of Chaos managed and shaped the present Chaos, but he didn't create it. Supposedly, an even greater being did."

"And what kind of being is that?" Vaan asked curiously, intrigued by the history of Chaos.

However, the dragon lord shook his head and said, "Unfortunately, this Lord isn't privy to such information. Only a few beings know about the origin of Chaos and how long it existed, and they are certainly not at our level of existence."

"If you are interested in finding the truth, you can try looking for it in Chaos. This Lord will wish you the best of luck since you would need it. After all, the truth is most likely buried after the infinite expansion of Chaos and formation of infinite realms."

"Wanting to find the truth of origin in Chaos is like looking for a specific speck of sand among the sea of stars," Lord Narvim stated.

Vaan naturally understood the dragon lord's logic.

Beings at their level of existence could only dream about it.

After all, they did not have the ability to even think about searching for the truth regarding the origin of Chaos.

How can he consider exploring the boundlessness of Chaos when he couldn't even travel stars?

"I'm a little curious, Your Excellency. Just how old are you?" Vaan asked.

After he raised the question, Astoria and the others also perked their ears with an even greater focus to listen.

"If we go by the human calendar, this Lord would be around ten thousand years or older," Lord Narvim replied.

"Ten thousand years..." Hester uttered with a blank look.

"The denizens of Chaos don't really have a concept of time. After all, we aren't bound by limited lifespans in Chaos," Lord Narvim mentioned before adding, "Of course, it's a different story now that we are here. This Lord feels his body aging as the day goes by."

"Given the boundless prospect of Chaos, why did you choose to come here, Your Excellency?" Vaan asked with knitted brows.

"That's an excellent question, one that this Lord is almost too embarrassed to answer, Vaan."

Chapter 294: The Dragon Tribe's Predicament

Although the dragon lord felt embarrassed to talk about their red dragon tribe's predicament, he did promise to do his best to answer their questions.

Thus, after gathering his thoughts and emotions, the dragon lord soon explained.

"It should be common knowledge by now, but this world is different from Chaos. If this world is considered the material dimension, then Chaos would be the spirit dimension. They are two different planes of existence."

"Although Chaos has higher level beings, the material dimension is considered the higher dimension due to its stability. And by stability, this Lord means the world's ability to resist change caused by lifeforms inhabiting it. You can also say that the material world is governed by stronger universal laws compared to Chaos."

"Thus, it's very resistant to human changes. For example, humans couldn't control the world's elements with magic before Gehenna's arrival, right?" Lord Narvim casually asked.

Everyone nodded.

Rather, magic didn't even exist prior to Gehenna's arrival due to the absence of mana.

"And because the objects of this world possess stronger laws, it makes them all the more valuable in Chaos. This is because it becomes increasingly difficult to progress further at a certain level of existence if one lacks talent in perceiving the universal laws of Chaos."

"Thus, our Dragon God saw it as an opportunity when the two dimensions connected, thinking he could let the entire tribe prosper by granting them a headstart in perceiving the stronger laws of the material dimension."

"Alas, our Dragon God underestimated the stability of this world. It was far more stable than our Dragon God could have imagined. This world rejects and suppresses denizens of Chaos. And to make matters worse, we've also landed in the Desolate Region."

"As such, this land of opportunity ended up becoming our cage," Lord Narvim stated.

"Can't you just return to Chaos through the Dimensional Crack in the north of the kingdom, Your Excellency?" Astoria asked.

"Return? Of course, we can return to Chaos through the Dimensional Crack," Lord Narvim admitted before adding, "But if we did, all that will await us is enslavement or a massacre. After all, True Dragons have always been highly valued for their materials."

"Without the Dragon God to protect us, the Great Devils of Gehenna will tear into our tribe like hungry wolves and take everything they want," Lord Narvim explained.

"What happened to your Dragon God, Your Excellency?" Vaan asked.

"Gone, became one with the earth to create the blessed land of fire underneath these mountains for his descendants," Lord Narvim replied.

"By letting us temper our bodies in the fire mixed with the Dragon God's flesh and blood, we've become accepted by this world and no longer considered denizens of Chaos. As such, we are no longer suppressed by this world."

"There's no doubt that we have become stronger as a result. But without a True Dragon at the divinity rank, our tribe's strength still falls short of deterring the Great Devils," Lord Narvim stated.

After the group listened to the dragon lord's explanation, they gradually grasped the dragon tribe's situation.

At the same time, more questions popped up in their minds.

"Do you know why the two dimensions were connected, Your Excellency? Also, what is this Desolate Region you've mentioned?" Vaan asked, growing ever more curious.

The dragon lord was full of knowledge.

He would be a fool not to take advantage of the opportunity presented to him and get all the answers to his questions.

"No matter how stable the material dimension is, the heavens would leave the path to eternity open. However, that so-called path to eternity only exists in the Divine Region, where divine energy exists. As for the Desolate Region, you should be able to guess it; it's a place devoid of divine energy."

"There's generally only one reason for the two dimensions to clash naturally; it means the material world has already started its destruction cycle," Lord Narvim stated.

"Destruction cycle? Are you saying this world will be destroyed by Gehenna, Your Excellency?" Hester asked with a frown.

"Not by Gehenna. It's the natural cycle of life and death of the universe itself," Lord Narvim corrected her misunderstanding before mentioning, "Have you heard the saying: everything was born from nothing, and everything will eventually return to nothing?"

"Does that have something to do with the universe's infinite expansion?" Vaan wondered.

"You can think that way," Lord Narvim smiled and said, "But contrary to Chaos's infinite expansion, which definitely grows larger, the universe doesn't become bigger. It becomes smaller instead."

"How does that even make sense, your Excellency? If the universe is infinitely expanding, it should grow larger, no?" Aeliana frowned at the contradictions.

"That's what everyone would assume," Lord Narvim admitted that he once thought the same way.

"However, the universe's expansion doesn't increase mass. It's simply an infinite increase in distance. As such, once a star becomes so distant that you can no longer see or even reach it, how can you prove it still exists?"

"If we have an infinite amount of lifespan, we can chase the star for eternity to find it," Astoria gave an answer after some thought.

"That would be true if you travel faster than the star. But if you travel slower, or even at the same speed as the escaping star, you will never reach it, even if you were given eternity to do so," Lord Narvim calmly stated before saying, "The universe is like one big bubble. Everything you know inside is called existence."

"But what do you think lies outside the big bubble? More empty voids of space? No, it's nothingness. Bubbles will eventually reach the limit of expansion and pop. But, of course, the universe doesn't just explode into nothingness like that."

"Once stars leave the bubble and enter the domain of nothingness, it simply fades from existence, becoming one with the nothingness. Hence, the universe will eventually return to nothingness, taking all life with it before a new universe is birthed into being," Lord Narvim explained.

"Doesn't that mean we are all going to die, Your Excellency?" Astoria frowned with alarm.

"If you live long enough to witness the death of the universe," Lord Narvim casually replied.

"However, the destruction cycle isn't something that just happens in one day. It could take thousands of years or even eons for the universe to complete its perpetual cycle of life and death."

"Even so, you have nothing to worry about. The universe might be a perpetual cycle of life and death, but Chaos is eternal," Lord Narvim stated.

Chapter 295: Ticking Time

"The universe might be a perpetual cycle of life and death, but Chaos is eternal..." Vaan muttered thoughtfully before looking up at the dragon lord.

"Are you saying the life and death cycle of the universe doesn't affect Chaos, Your Excellency? In other words, we can find safe refuge from the destruction cycle by moving to Chaos?"

"Well, yes, but actually no," Lord Narvim replied.

"Even if you move to Chaos, you will never truly be safe unless you have the power to protect yourself," For example, you might settle down in a place you assumed to be a safe and peaceful region. But the next thing you know, two powerhouses could fight in your backyard and destroy everything."

"Nevertheless, moving to Chaos offers a chance of survival, rather than staying in the material world and meeting certain death along with the universe. But as this Lord said, you don't need to worry about moving to Chaos; your world will become a part of Chaos long before it can disappear into nothingness," Lord Narvim assured.

"What do you mean by that, Your Excellency? Are you saying Chaos will swallow our world?" Astoria asked with interest.

"That's exactly what this Lord is saying," Lord Narvim nodded before continuing, "Since the universe was supposedly birthed from nothingness and will return to nothingness, it won't matter how much of the cosmos is devoured by Chaos. A new universe will eventually be born from nothing again."

"In other words, the energy of the old universe is not needed to give life to the new universe, huh?" Vaan rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

Even in his past life, he had always been fascinated with outer space.

Thus, he found it surprising and unexpected that he could engage in such a topic before the human world reached a certain level of civilization.

Nevertheless, it was even more surprising that the dragon lord, a denizen of Chaos, knew more about the material world than them, the locals of said world.

It showed Chaos had an incredibly long history.

'Just how many life and death of a universe has Chaos experienced since it came into being?' Vaan silently wondered.

"It was said that in the beginning, there was only nothingness. Then, there was Primal Chaos, the first universe. Now, there's Chaos, the world created by a Great Being that lived during the era of Primal Chaos," Lord Narvim mentioned.

"These are unverified rumors that are passed around, so you don't need to take them seriously. However, they are generally accepted as the truth since they seem logical."

"For example, there's another rumor that Chaos isn't found on a completely different dimension from the material world, but just outside the bubble known as the universe where nothingness exists. Thus, the universe no longer fades into nothingness; they enter Chaos first before they can reach nothingness," Lord Narvim mentioned.

"That's indeed an interesting thought. We don't know much about how the world works, so I have no way to refute that claim," Astoria commented.

She didn't see any flaw in the logic.

"I'm more curious about the origin of the rumors," Vaan thoughtfully said before continuing, "They don't seem like they just came out of nowhere. Perhaps, a being who knew the truth of origin tried to preach it and educate the denizens of Chaos about the beginning of everything."

"But why would they do that?" Hester asked.

"Perhaps, so Chaos will remember that Great Being that made it possible for life to prosper beyond the life and death of the universe?" Vaan guessed.

"If you think about it, someone powerful enough to create Chaos should be more famous than someone who only manages and rule over it. And yet, denizens of Chaos know little to nothing about this Great Being in comparison to the Lord of Chaos."

"Of course, we can attribute it to the truth being buried in time. But if the Great Being was still around, the Great Being should be well-known, right? Perhaps, the Great Being paid a great price to create Chaos? Well, there's also the possibility that the Great Being became reclusive after saving the world."

"Nevertheless, there's a huge problem we haven't addressed yet," Vaan suddenly mentioned shortly after.

"Oh?" Lord Narvim glanced at Vaan curiously and asked, "What kind of problem would that be?"

"Your Excellency mentioned that your Dragon God wanted to seek opportunities in our world by arriving early but underestimated the stability of this world," Vaan mentioned.

"That's right," Lord Narvim nodded and urged him to continue, "Go on."

"In other words, other denizens of Chaos would also hope to acquire opportunities in our world. The Great Devils shouldn't be an exception," Vaan speculated.

"I've always wondered why the Great Devils haven't descended on this world, but I've realized it's because the Dragon God has deterred them from coming. They don't want to be suppressed by the Dragon God upon their descent."

"However, they don't know the Dragon God is gone. That's also why your dragon tribe is secluded from the world. Isn't that right, your Excellency?" Vaan sought the dragon lord's confirmation.

"You've guessed it, Vaan," Lord Narvim admitted.

"Our dragon tribe isn't on good terms with the Great Devils, and the only reason they have descended is that they precisely fear our Dragon God. But the situation won't stay the same forever, even if we manage to keep the Dragon God's death secret."

"It's just a matter of time before this world's stability weakens to the point that it can no longer suppress denizens of Chaos. Once that happens, the Great Devils will no doubt descend and wreak havoc for each of their own benefits," Lord Narvim stated.

Everyone felt heavy-hearted when they heard the dragon lord's words.

As things stand, the power of the seven Great Devils wasn't something humans could resist. If even one Great Devil descended, it would plunge the entire world into chaos.

No one would have control over their own lives.

"Is there a way to stop the Great Devils from descending?" Hester inquired.

"Demons invade our world periodically. I assume they are sent to scout the world and check on its stability," Vaan mentioned before suggesting, "If we can stop them from entering our world, perhaps the Great Devils will have no way of knowing the state of the world's stability."

"That's indeed one way to handle the situation," Lord Narvim agreed with a nod before adding, "However..."

Chapter 296: The Confrontation

"However, even in terms of raw strength and numbers, your world is too lacking. If the Great Devils truly wanted to invade your world without a care for the price, your world would be overrun with demons," Lord Narvim stated.

"The Gehenna Realm might just be a small part of Chaos, but it's still larger than your world countless times over. The number of demons the Great Devils could raise under their war banner would be staggering. Grim isn't enough to describe our situation."

"The only solutions this Lord can think of is to raise a dozen Rank 6 beings of our own or seek help from a Rank 7 being in a neighboring realm. However, either task is exceeding difficult to accomplish," Lord Narvim concluded with a sigh.

What should have been an enjoyable discussion took a depressive turn and filled the area with gloominess.

"Enough of that. Are there any other questions?" Lord Narvim asked, changing the topic.

Nevertheless, the dragon lord underestimated human curiosity.

If the dragon lord had to wait for Vaan's group to ask all their questions before he could ask them a question of his own, he would not get the chance.

"Then, we will ask one more question, Your Excellency." Vaan wryly smiled, feeling a little bad for the dragon lord.

After casting a glance at Astoria, Hester, and Aeliana, they quickly reached a tacit understanding and allowed him to ask the last question.

"Seeing how Ninth Peak has a building for human accommodation, it must be true that humans have visited your mountain before. And not just any human, but our kingdom's ruler, Her Majesty, Henrietta Rosegarden," Vaan mentioned before asking, "Can you tell us what agreements you've made with each other, Your Excellency?"

Astoria, Hester, and Aeliana immediately showed interest in the dragon lord's answer.

"That's a tricky question you've asked there, Vaan. Nevertheless, this Lord won't go back on his words. This Lord will answer you, but it will have to wait," Lord Narvim replied before mentioning, "It should be about time now. This Lord will be back shortly."

Shortly after saying that, the dragon lord rose to his feet, created a large tear in space, then disappeared inside.

Vaan and the others were suddenly left hanging as they had no choice but to wait for the dragon lord to return from his unfinished business.

Nevertheless, Vaan could guess where the dragon lord went; the dragon lord most likely went after the Fallen Witches that had escaped.

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Principality of Dainsleif, Black Witch Society's headquarters

As Fallen Witches busied about the pocket realm with their assigned tasks, a spatial portal suddenly appeared in the middle of their headquarters.

Its sudden appearance immediately attracted nearby Fallen Witches, but no one expressed any surprise; they knew who was returning.

A few moments later, Claudette returned with Opalina.

"Did we need to take such a risk by making so many detours through the Holy Knight Empire, Claudette?" Opalina asked with a weary and sour mood.

"We can't be too careful, Opalina," Claudette stated with some fatigue before explaining, "After all, the True Dragons know how to lock down the spatial region in the Thousand Fog Mountains. Thus, we can expect them to have experts in Spatial Magic among them. We don't want them following us back to our headquarters."

"Claudette? Opalina? Why are there only the two of you? Where are the others?" the Witch Mother came to greet them.

"We were forced to abandon them, Witch Mother. I was barely able to escape with just Opalina." Claudette dropped to her knees and apologized for her incompetence, "Forgive me for being incapable, Witch Mother."

"Haiz, it seems your group met with unprecedented danger if you were forced to escape," the Witch Mother softly sighed and said, "It's good that you and Opalina made it back at least. Now, tell me what happened—No, never mind. It's too late for that."

"What do you..." Claudette didn't finish her question before she felt the spatial disturbance.

A few moments later, an especially large spatial tear appeared fifty yards away from their location before a huge red dragon emerged from it.

"T-True Dragon! It followed us back, dammit!" Opalina exclaimed as her face immediately paled with fear.

The red dragon before her was so much larger than the other red dragons she had seen during her brief stay on the ninth mountain!

No doubt, it's also much stronger than the other red dragons!

"Impossible... I made so many detours to ensure the dragons wouldn't be able to trace back to us..." Claudette uttered with disbelief.

Lord Narvim glanced at her dismissively, but she still felt suffocated by the towering pressure emanating from his body.

"Foolish black witch. It doesn't matter how many spatial portals you make. If you can't erase your tracks, this Lord will still find you," Lord Narvim coolly stated, shocking everyone present.

The dragon could speak their language!

"Now, this Lord will give you a choice. Will you and the black witch beside you follow this Lord back to Ninth Peak for judgment, or will you both choose to die here? Of course, if you choose the first option, this Lord still has to wipe everyone's memories," Lord Narvim listed his conditions.

"Unfortunately, I can't allow either of those choices to happen, Your Excellency," the Witch Mother firmly stated, stepping in front of Claudette and Opalina to protect them from the dragon lord.

Although she appeared calm, she still felt the pressure of facing a higher-rank being.

Lord Narvim gave her a single glance and immediately figured out her strength before expressing some surprise.

"It's not easy for a witch to reach the Pseudo-Transcendent rank. If you don't die, you are bound to become a Transcendent Witch," Lord Narvim casually mentioned before advising her to step down, "You don't want to do this."

"I don't. But you leave me with no other choice, Your Excellency," the Witch Mother argued with a grave look. "Both choices are unacceptable. Claudette is too important to our society's development. And why must you wipe our memories?"

"That's something you don't need to know," Lord Narvim stated indifferently before glancing around at the large gathering of Fallen Witches.

Although they were clearly scared, they were prepared to fight.

"This Lord gave you all a chance to live, but you chose to die instead," Lord Narvim sighed before his eyes glinted with coldness. "Remember, you all chose this."

"No. You did, Your Excellency," the Witch Mother coldly replied before stomping on the ground.

In the next instant, the entire pocket realm rumbled and glowed with dark light before black chains shot out of the ground and ceilings, binding the dragon lord's huge body in place.

Chapter 297: Aligning Interests

"Enter formation!" the Witch Mother shouted shortly after summoning the black chains.

In that instant, the Fallen Witches quickly surrounded the dragon lord.

The Fallen Witches summoned smaller black chains before attaching them to the larger black chains binding the dragon lord, allowing them to channel power and reinforce the restraining spell.

Nevertheless, the dragon lord calmly allowed himself to be chained without a hint of resistance. Despite having his movements restricted, the dragon lord remained casual and indifferent to the spell.

At the same time, a portion of the Fallen Witches fired numerous offensive spells at him while his movements were restrained.

However, they were all useless.

Not only did his True Dragon body have an extremely high level of defense, but he also had a great degree of resistance to all magic.

The Fallen Witches simply couldn't hurt him.

"The dragon is too strong..." one of the Fallen Witches despaired as she witnessed the futility of her struggle.

Nevertheless, Lord Narvim continued to endure the barrage of attack magic with a nonchalant attitude. He showed more interest in the restraining spell.

"Dark Chains, huh? You black witches certainly have some tricks prepared. This Lord is a little interested. However, you have chosen to defy this Lord, and thus, chosen death!" Lord Narvim stated sternly before preparing to shatter the dark chains.

However, the black chains, which he didn't give much attention to, were slightly more sturdy than he expected.

When he tried to break free from the black chains, red runes emerged on the surface of the black chains, amplifying their restraining power in proportion to his resistance.

"Hm? A double-layered spell, huh? Using Dark Chains and Rune Magic? No, this is Ancient Magic!" Lord Narvim concluded. His gaze turned slightly more serious before he scrutinized the Witch Mother. "Who are you?"

A human of your level shouldn't have any access to the Ancient Magic knowledge, let alone use them!"

"Me? I'm just a human doing everything she can to survive, Your Excellency," the Witch Mother casually replied before saying, "Since you know this is Ancient Magic, you should also know that this is Rank 5 Ancient Magic."

"Even if it's you, it will take you some time to break free from it, Your Excellency," the Witch Mother stated.

"Yes, this Lord must admit that your Ancient Magic has exceeded this Lord's expectation," Lord Narvim acknowledged and said, "If this Lord was just any normal Rank 5 being, this Rank 5 Ancient Magic might cause this Lord some inconvenience."

"However, this Lord is no ordinary Rank 5 being, but a Mid-level Rank 5 True Dragon. Therefore, this Lord just has to exert slightly more effort to break this ancient spell."

"And when that happens, I will just have to cast another Rank 5 ancient spell to keep there, Your Excellency," the Witch Mother firmly stated before adding, "Since it's Ancient Magic, I can cast it as many times as I want regardless of my rank and mana reserve!"

"Foolish witch. Do you really think there are no consequences if you use Ancient Magic without reservation?" Lord Narvim snorted in contempt.

"You are directly interfering with the Heavenly Laws and burning up your power of existence. Once your existence dries up, you will cease to exist with no hope of reincarnating!"

"Furthermore, you are relying on your fellow black witches to reinforce your ancient spell. After their mana runs out, what next? Burn their life force? Do you think they can survive if this Lord breaks your ancient spell repeatedly?" Lord Narvim questioned her.

"Perhaps not. But do you think we will just sit still and wait for that to happen, Your Excellency?" the Witch Mother responded before mentioning, "It is clear that you have a reason why you have to wipe our memories. You don't want others to know about your dragon tribe."

"Thus, what do you think will happen if I keep you here and send my people to spread the news about your tribe across both the continent and Gehenna, Your Excellency? You wouldn't want that, right?" the Witch Mother guessed.

"Are you threatening this Lord, Witch?" Lord Narvim questioned her in a stern and solemn tone.

"Not at all." The Witch Mother shook her head and said, "I don't dare to threaten you, nor do I want to fight you, Your Excellency. However, you've left us with no choice. You put your interests above ours. I am simply trying to realign our interests."

"I'm sure we could work out something we can both agree on if we just talk, Your Excellency," the Witch Mother stated.

The Rank 5 True Dragon had the power to wipe every one of them out, but that didn't mean they would just go down quietly.

No, they can create trouble for the True Dragons before they die!

Lord Narvim stared at the Witch Mother silently for some time before he uttered, "You had my curiosity. Now you have my attention."

"Speak! What suggestions do you have, Witch?" Lord Narvim urged her.

"I'm sure Contract Magic is child's play to a powerful and grand True Dragon such as yourself, Your Excellency," the Witch Mother mentioned before suggesting, "Instead of wiping our memories, we can enter a contract that prevents us from spreading the news of your dragon tribe's existence."

"That's indeed an alternative solution. This Lord can agree to use Contract Magic instead of wiping your memories," Lord Narvim approved before suddenly adding with a stern look, "However, the two black witches you are protecting still have to be trialed for their crimes."

"I'm still not quite sure of the details, Your Excellency. Why don't you tell me exactly what crimes they have committed?" the Witch Mother replied with knitted brows.

"They are involved in the death of a young dragon," Lord Narvim coolly replied before adding, "Although the direct perpetrator has already been judged, they are just as guilty. The young dragon wouldn't have died if they hadn't used their abilities to trespass on this Lord's domain."

"Is there no way you can let them off, Your Excellency?" the Witch Mother pleaded. "After all, you have already judged the direct perpetrator of the young dragon's death."

"You can try convincing this Lord. For example, what can you offer this Lord? And who is your patron?" Lord Narvim asked.

Normal humans shouldn't be privy to Ancient Magic.

Chapter 298: The Witch Mother's Identity

"I don't have a patron, Your Excellency," the Witch Mother replied.

"Humans in this world are still young to magic. It's impossible for you to know Ancient Magic unless a great patron taught you, Witch," Lord Narvim coolly stated before adding, "Don't take this Lord for a fool."

"Not a fool, but more narrow-minded than I thought," the Witch Mother boldly replied before saying, "Having a powerful patron isn't the only way I can know about Ancient Magic, Your Excellency."

"Oh? Then, why don't you enlighten this Lord?" Lord Narvim casually suggested.

"Only if you promise to let these two off with Contract Magic," the Witch Mother stated before adding, "If you can do that, I'll be willing to tell you how I know Ancient Magic, Your Excellency."

"Impossible," Lord Narvim rejected. "This Lord is still considering whether this Lord should spare all of you; don't take it as this Lord has already agreed. As far as this Lord is concerned, you could be an enemy of this Lord's tribe."

"I can assure you that we are not your enemy. I can even swear it under Contract Magic. We are no one's enemy but those who threaten our livelihood. Thus, unless you want us to be your enemy, we are not," the Witch Mother declared.

"Then, swear it under Contract Magic," Lord Narvim urged, still in doubt.

Thus, the Witch Mother had no choice but to use Contract Magic on herself and swear that she was not his enemy.

"If what I said was untruthful, I will suffer the consequence of breaking the promise to speak the truth," the Witch Mother declared at the end of her oath.

A short while later, nothing happened to her, proving she was speaking the truth. Thus, the dragon lord decided to trust her.

"Alright. You've gained my trust," Lord Narvim declared shortly after.

Afterward, he used Contract Magic and made a promise not to pursue the two black witches, Claudette and Opalina, beside the Witch Mother in exchange for her to reveal her information.

However, once the contract was in effect, the Witch Mother didn't reveal the origin of her Ancient Magic knowledge immediately.

She didn't want the other Fallen Witches to hear about it. She deemed it wasn't the time for them to learn more about her.

Thus, the Witch Mother dismissed everyone after Lord Narvim used Contract Magic on the entire Black Witch Society and had everyone keep silent on his dragon tribe's existence in exchange for not wiping their memories.

The black chains on the dragon lord's body were long removed as it was no longer needed.

They were able to come to a mutual understanding.

"Witch Mother..." Claudette uttered, feeling concerned about the Witch Mother's safety.

"Leave us," the Witch Mother dismissed her in a firm tone. "I will handle this situation by myself. None of you are needed."

"Understood, Witch Mother."

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Sometime later, the Witch Mother was left alone with the dragon lord. No other Fallen Witches were around to disturb or eavesdrop on them.

"Now, can you tell this Lord where you learned about Ancient Magic?" Lord Narvim asked.

"I've learned it myself, Your Excellency," the Witch Mother replied before adding, "You might not believe it, but that is indeed the truth."

Without any surprise, the dragon lord quickly denied the claim. However, the contract wasn't broken, implying the Witch Mother was also speaking the truth.

Thus, the dragon lord gave it some more thought before his eyes widened with surprise.

"You're a Reincarnator," Lord Narvim concluded before adding, "And not just any Reincarnator; you've retained memories of your past life. You must have been someone especially powerful. Just who exactly are you?"

"I wonder if you've heard about the seven Calamity Witches from the Nightmare Realm?" the Witch Mother casually asked, but Lord Narvim's expression changed drastically upon hearing it.

"Have this Lord heard about it? There's no way this Lord hasn't heard about them," Lord Narvim reacted significantly, proving he was well aware of them.

"The Nightmare Realm is situated right next to the Gehenna Realm, and the seven Calamity Witches are the rulers of that realm. But even those the seven Calamity Witches are realm rulers like the seven Great Devils, they can't even be compared in the same breath."

"The seven Calamity Witches are Rank 7 beings! Don't tell you are..." Lord Narvim glanced at the Witch Mother with shock, guessing she was one of the seven Calamity Witches.

However, the Witch Mother quickly denied it.

"Hahaha, no. I am not one of the seven Calamity Witches," the Witch Mother stated. But before Lord Narvim could calm down, she continued, "I was only one of the Storm Calamity Witch's close retainer."

'Only...' Lord Narvim's lips twitched.

As a Rank 7 being, the Storm Calamity Witch's close retainers would be Rank 6 beings at least and no weaker than Rank 5.

And yet, he had been referring to himself as Lord in front of such a person.

"You don't need to change your manner of speech for me, Your Excellency." The Witch Mother knew what he was thinking and said, "Right now, you are indeed stronger than my former peak. Thus, it's only right that I should be the one to treat you with more respect."

"Even so, how did one of the Storm Calamity Witch's close retainer end up reincarnating in this world?" Lord Narvim wondered before guessing, "Did Nightmare start a Realm War and lose?"

"What your tongue, dragon," the Witch Mother warned as her eyes glinted coldly, causing Lord Narvim's expression to stiffen slightly from the pressure.

Even though the Witch Mother no longer possessed the strength of her past life, she was still someone who stood on a higher level of existence than the dragon lord.

Thus, Lord Narvim was slightly intimidated by her cold gaze.

"There's no way Milady would lose to anyone. I simply chose to enter the cycle of reincarnation of my own volition. Only a foolish realm ruler would wage a Realm War against Nightmare. And if Nightmare were to wage one, they would be absolutely certain of their victory."

Nevertheless, the dragon lord was baffled by her answer.

"Since when was it easy to reincarnate? And with intact memories, no less? But, more importantly, why would anyone willingly kill themselves?" Lord Narvim frowned with doubt.

"Curious?" The Witch Mother smiled before casually saying, "Well, I don't mind telling you. But what can you offer me in exchange for the information?"

Chapter 299: Unexpected Alliance

Thousand Fog Mountain, Ninth Peak

As Vaan and the others waited for the dragon lord to return, he started to ponder over the information he had learned.

'If the universe is a bubble of existence, and everything out was Chaos and nothingness, then the Realm Fragments were, in fact, the fragments of that bubble of existence?' Vaan mused.

In other words, the Realm Fragments contained the power of existence.

Realm Fragments were precious because they were filled with mana and could grant new abilities. But they didn't just give any random abilities; they simply unlocked one's innate talent in accordance with their rise in existence level.

'Topaz didn't rise to a higher rank before because the Realm Fragment was full of pure mana; she rose because the power of existence raised her existence level,' Vaan thought.

He seemed to figure out the truth behind the Realm Fragment's properties. That said, there were still parts that he didn't understand.

For example, where did the Realm Fragment's sharpness come from?

There was a possibility that the Realm Fragment contained not only the power of existence but a very thin trace of the power of nothingness.

That would explain its sharpness.

However, the Realm Fragments shouldn't have any power of nothingness if Chaos lies just outside the universe bubble before the endlessness of nothingness.

'No, Chaos can be outside the bubble before nothingness, but that doesn't necessarily mean there is no gap for nothingness between Chaos and the bubble,' Vaan suddenly thought.

After all, Chaos was unreachable prior to Gehenna's arrival.

Thus, there must be a thin layer of nothingness separating Chaos and the universe from coming into contact, thereby making them seem like separate dimensions.

'It should be something like this,' Vaan reached his conclusion.

Meanwhile, Vaan also engaged in idle discussions with Astoria, Hester, and Aeliana to pass the time as they waited.

Sometime later, a large tear in space appeared before the dragon lord emerged, returning from his short trip.

However, he did not come back alone.

Everyone was surprised to see the dragon lord return with a beautiful human woman—No, a witch, and not just any witch.

'Fallen Witch!' everyone quickly concluded.

The beautiful woman appeared young like many witches but possessed a mature yet seemingly ancient aura.

She wore a gothic-style black dress, had black-painted nails, purple lipstick, a pale complexion, knee-long black hair, sharp red eyes, thin brows, a tall nose bridge, and an hourglass figure with D-cup breasts.

Overall, she was plainly dressed with a touch of makeup. She didn't have any accessories or magic tools equipped and was even barefoot.

However, while she was ill-equipped for battle, no one underestimated her.

'This person is too strong!' Astoria and the others thought.

"Everyone can relax. This Lord has brought a friend to join our discussion. While this Lord understands your kingdom has prejudices against black witches, this Lord can guarantee she will not harm you," Lord Narvim assured them before adding, "Of course, this Lord doesn't recommend you attacking her either."

"She's a Pseudo-Transcendent Witch. None of you is her opponent," Lord Narvim stated.

'Pseudo-Transcendent...'

Astoria and the other ladies were stunned after they were informed about the Fallen Witch's strength.

While High Witches in the kingdom struggled to reach the middle stage, a Fallen Witch had already come close to the Transcendent Rank.

At the same time, the Witch Mother could sense their complicated emotions and sense of defeat. That said, their feelings didn't concern her.

As such, she simply smiled without a word.

Nevertheless, the dragon lord wanted both sides to become familiar. Thus, he asked them to introduce themselves.

"I am Ophelia Tempest, founder of the Black Witch Society. Many refer to me as the Witch Mother, but you may simply address me as Lady Ophelia," the Witch Mother introduced herself.

Shortly after Vaan and the others also briefly introduced themselves, Ophelia glanced at Vaan with interest.

She found it rare for a man to sit among them as their equal, given the state of the Black Rose Kingdom.

Nevertheless, Vaan turned his attention to the dragon lord and inquired, "May I ask why you've brought Lady Ophelia here, Your Excellency?"

He figured the dragon lord might have struck some sort of deal with the Black Witch Society, seeing how the dragon lord didn't capture and return with the two missing escapees.

Given the dragon lord's great strength, he found it hard to believe the Black Witch Society had the means to harm him.

In other words, the Black Witch Society offered something the dragon lord simply couldn't refuse.

"This Lord and Lady Ophelia have entered an alliance. Thus, this Lord hopes the Black Rose Kingdom would cease any and all aggression against the Black Witch Society," Lord Narvim stated.

Astoria immediately frowned.

"This isn't something we can make a decision on," Astoria replied before saying, "If Your Excellency wants us to be friendly with the Black Witch Society, we can. However, we don't represent the entire kingdom. Only our ruler can make that decision."

"Your cooperation is enough for now. This Lord will discuss this matter with Lady Henrietta another time," Lord Narvim casually said.

"I'm quite curious, Your Excellency," Vaan expressed his interest before inquiring, "Why did you ally with Lady Ophelia? What did she offer you?"

"Information, important information that can help us resist the threats of Gehenna. At the same time, the Black Witch Society is willing to join forces with us to resist the Great Devils' invasions should the time come," Lord Narvim answered.

"The Fallen Witches will?" Hester glanced at the Witch Mother with misgivings and said, "It would be better if Fallen Witches weren't involved. Who knows if they would suddenly join the demons and stab us in the back or not."

"You don't have to worry about that. This Lord can assure you that Lady Ophelia can be trusted. She has already sworn it under oath using Contract Magic," Lord Narvim assured. "She is not our enemy."

"May I hear the exact words of Lady Ophelia's oath, Your Excellency?" Vaan suddenly requested before mentioning, "After all, the friend of a friend isn't necessarily a friend. She can be your friend and still be our enemy."

"If you're worried, I can swear a new oath under Contract Magic for you, Handsome," Ophelia slightly smiled.

Chapter 300: The Evils We Create

"Then please do, Lady Ophelia," Vaan calmly replied, unaffected by her charms.

"My, you're all quite cautious, huh?" Ophelia glanced at Vaan's tensed group before nodding with a smile. "Alright, I don't mind. However, Contract Magic works both ways. If I swear I am not your enemy, your side also has to promise the same for my side."

"Very well, Lady Ophelia. Start the spell," Astoria agreed.

Shortly after, Astoria acted as the representative and entered a contract with the Witch Mother to prove they were both willing to be friendly to each other.

"Alright, you've gained our trust. But only for as long as the contract spell is in effect. Once it loses its effect, you will also lose our trust," Astoria stated.

"Likewise, Lady Astoria," Ophelia calmly replied before saying, "Nevertheless, it's clear that your kingdom has a misconception about Fallen Witches. Not all of us are evil or on the demon's side."

"Aren't you?" Hester glanced at her suspiciously.

"I believe I've already proven I'm not on the demon's side. Thus, there's no need for me to prove that again. As for whether I am evil or not? That is subjective. I can be evil to my enemies but a saint to my people," Ophelia casually stated.

"Let's be honest. Fallen Witches are persecuted because you fear our capabilities and that we are different, not because we are evil, the demon's minion, or whatever. If you say we lack morality, then I would say you are right."

"However, Fallen Witches aren't the only people that lack morality. In fact, we only account for a minority. There are more vile and evil witches and humans than Fallen Witches. Thus, your argument would be a little weak on this subject," Ophelia coolly stated.

"Nevertheless, you can't deny that all Fallen Witches are evil," Hester argued.

"As a matter of fact, I can," Ophelia claimed before saying, "Only a minority of Fallen Witches are evil and anti-human; the rest are innocent. And even if they are evil, they would be the evils you witches and humans created."

"What do you mean by that, Lady Ophelia?" Astoria asked with a frown.

"How do you think Fallen Witches are born outside the seven witch kingdoms, where the influence of witches is weaker?" Ophelia quizzed. But without waiting for an answer, she continued, "Do you know how witches are treated outside?"

"Thanks to your seven witch kingdoms and your extreme matriarchal culture, the weak and non-combat witches who can't defend themselves outside the seven witch kingdoms are treated as incubators to give birth to the next generation of new humans! And that's if they have high fertility rates!"

"Otherwise, they face even worse fates! Abuse, rape, torture, experimental subjects. They simply become lab rats or toys for men! All that negativity and despair is what gives birth to a Fallen Witch!" Ophelia stated.

"You're wrong," Astoria coolly denied and said, "Various kingdoms and empires had existed long before the seven witch kingdoms were founded. Therefore, such ill-treatments of witches had started long before the establishment of the witch kingdoms!"

"The witch kingdoms were founded to create a safe haven for witches and free them from the evils of men. How men are treated in the witch kingdoms is simply retaliation for how witches are treated outside the witch kingdoms."

"Nevertheless, this cycle of hatred between men and witches has gone on for too long. Innocent men shouldn't be maltreated due to the evils committed by other men. This only continues the cycle of hatred," Astoria said with a sigh shortly after.

"And yet your side only focuses on improving the treatment of men in your witch kingdoms." Ophelia briefly glanced at Vaan before continuing, "You do nothing for the witches outside."

"You have abandoned the witches outside and allowed Fallen Witches to emerge. So what right does your kingdom have to persecute us?" Ophelia questioned her.

"If I remember correctly, we've never persecuted Fallen Witches without good reasoning," Astoria argued.

"Every time a Fallen Witch emerged in our kingdom, destruction and death always follow. Should I remind you that your people trespassed on our land and almost slaughtered an entire town? Two wrongs don't make a right."

"Furthermore, how ridiculous it is that you are blaming us for abandoning witches. Rather than abandoning seven-tenths of all witches, it should be said that we have saved three-tenths of all witches! You are barking up the wrong tree, Lady Ophelia."

"Do you think we don't have our hands full dealing with the demons in the north of the continent? What makes you think we have the spare effort and power to correct the wrongdoings of other countries?" Astoria questioned her.

"No matter how you phrase it, it doesn't change the fact that the witch kingdoms have abandoned the witches outside their domains," Ophelia stubbornly argued.

"The seven witch kingdoms don't have enough power to deal with other countries? Don't bullshit in front of my face, Lady Astoria. The seven witch kingdoms might be small in comparison to the other countries, but they have the seven Transcendent Witches."

"Furthermore, I've made many trips to Gehenna, so don't treat me like a fool. I know the situation on the frontlines very well. The frontlines have been relatively peaceful since the end of the last Holy War. Your witch kingdoms can definitely spare the effort and power to save more witches from the other countries."

"Let's be honest. The Transcendent Witches have abandoned the witches outside their domains because they view the other countries' poor treatment of witches as a necessary sacrifice to combat the low fertility rate of humans," Ophelia mentioned.

Vaan silently listened and agreed with both sides.

None of them were wrong; there were simply too many wrongs in the world.

Humanity's strengths used to be intelligence and high fertility. That's why humankind overcame the difficulties of other races and dominated the continent.

However, the emergence of mana and Gehenna crippled their high fertility and reset their worldly understanding.

Thus, Vaan could understand humanity's need for extreme study and increased copulation.

If the other larger countries didn't adopt these methods to adapt to the new world, perhaps humanity would eventually be wiped out due to the high death rate.

It was a necessary evil for the greater good.