

## The Witch 311

### Chapter 311: Hedwig Concedes

"But I don't remember us being love rivals. I believe a gentleman's duel is the wrong term for this," Vaan commented.

"Eh? Is that so?" Hedwig uttered with a bit of surprise before shrugging, "Well, no matter. Don't sweat the details and fight me, Vaan!"

"Alright," Vaan casually smiled with amusement.

The dragon was a little interesting. Despite all his apparent insults and provocations that infuriated the dragon, the dragon was also quick to forget all of that.

'Is this dragon a battle maniac?' Vaan mused.

At the same time, Gryme wore a gloomy look after being told to shut up by Hedwig. After all, he was the leader of the group.

How dare an underling tells him to shut up?

"This damn battle maniac..." Gryme muttered darkly.

Boom! Boom!

The battle between Vaan and Hedwig raged on as the magma sea rippled and splashed due to their impactful exchange.

As both had extremely high defenses, it was very difficult for them to inflict damage on each other with just pure physical attacks.

However, because they precisely had high defenses, they could attack each other to their heart's content.

Peng!

Vaan went flying from a tail sweep before he crashed into the crowd on the edge of the battle ring formed by dragons.

Nevertheless, the dragon he crashed into didn't budge and shoved him back into the ring.

Vaan used Earth Manipulation to create solid pedestals for him to step on as he rushed back toward Hedwig's position—only to be greeted with another tail sweep.

However, his rock pedestal quickly rose, turning into a rock pillar sticking out of the magma sea and launching him into the air.

Boom!

Hedwig's tail sweep shattered the rock pillar but otherwise missed Vaan.

At the same time, Vaan quickly reached the peak altitude of his flight before he did a flip while drawing an arc in the air and descended with even greater speed.

The power of gravity and increased kinetic movement allowed Vaan to close the distance on Hedwig in a flash.

Bam!

Vaan landed another fist squarely on Hedwig's head in the same spot he had targeted in their last dozen exchange.

Following the strong punch, he rained over two dozen quick fists on the same spot again in the next instance before Hedwig rammed his body away.

However, Vaan somersaulted in the air and shattered a levitating rock he controlled in the air with a powerful step and launched himself back at Hedwig's head again.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Vaan continued to abuse the same middle spot between Hedwig's two eyes before Hedwig cried with annoyance while shaking his head furiously to shake Vaan off him.

"Dammit, Vaan! Why do you keep hitting the same spot?! Don't you have any other moves?!" Hedwig asked.

"Aren't we returning tit for tat? You're technically hit me in the same spot as well, so I'd say this is pretty fair, Hedwig," Vaan said with a sly yet amused smile.

"How is this the same..." Hedwig wanted to argue, but he quickly fell silent after giving it some thought.

Due to their sheer size difference, each of Hedwig's attacks covered Vaan's whole body. Thus, it wasn't wrong when Vaan said Hedwig had also been hitting one spot.

Vaan's whole body was one damn spot!

Although Hedwig quickly understood Vaan's meaning, it didn't mean he liked it.

"Anyway, stop that. I don't like it," Hedwig said stubbornly, like a child throwing a tantrum.

Even though their defenses were so high that they couldn't hurt each other with blunt force, that was only for the first attack.

As long as their attacks reached a certain level and targeted the same area, the defense in the area would gradually weaken and start to sting from repeated impacts.

Vaan was delivering minimum damage but maximum pain. If he continued, the damage would keep accumulating.

Nevertheless, Hedwig wasn't just starting to feel the sting from Vaan's punches; he was also feeling a little dizzy and disorientated from the consecutive blows to his head.

"Oh? If I stop hitting that same spot, then does that mean you will stop hitting me as well?" Vaan casually replied with a smile.

"Yes," Hedwig quickly acknowledged with a nod before suddenly pausing. "No, wait a minute..."

Nevertheless, while Hedwig was thinking over their agreement, Vaan manipulated floating rocks to air-walk onto Hedwig's head before he rained down punches in various areas.

Even so, he mainly targeted Hedwig's nose.

Although he had agreed not to hit between the eyes, he was still going for parts of Hedwig's head for concussive blows.

Of course, Hedwig wasn't going to let himself get abused for nothing; he wanted to smack Vaan off his head with one of his front legs.

However, Vaan quickly asked him, "Are you going to go back on your words, Hedwig?"

Thus, Hedwig quickly froze. He became at a loss for words as he was stuck in a dilemma. It was true that he had said yes, but he was also tricked.

Nevertheless, while Hedwig was wasting time on thinking, which kept getting interrupted by Vaan's attacks and causing him to be unable to think, Vaan remained relentless in his attacks.

It didn't really matter to him whether his opponent fought back or not; he only needed a punching bag to get a good feel of his strength.

Eventually, Hedwig had enough. He was really enjoying their fight, but it quickly turned into something he didn't like.

Vaan was too mean.

"Alright, alright! I give up! Stop hitting my head! You win, Vaan! I don't want to fight anymore!" Hedwig conceded.

A fight where he wasn't allowed to fight back wasn't considered a fight at all!

"Alright," Vaan stopped his attacks with a grin and said, "I think we can be friends. Let's have a proper fight next time."

Hedwig rolled his eyes.

No wonder humans aren't well-liked by dragons; they were too scheming and wicked.

"I'll think about it," Hedwig replied sulkily.

"What the hell was even that?" Gryme witnessed the fight from start to end without batting an eye and became even more gloomy. "I shouldn't have sent Hedwig, that stupid muscle-brain. He's a goddamned embarrassment to us all!"

Chapter 312: Rather Die Than Yield

"Regardless of the human's methods, the human has proven his strength. Therefore, we no longer have the right to look down on him," a Mid-level Rank 4 True Dragon within the group spoke.

Although seeing so much strength in such a small body was shocking, the dragons couldn't deny the truth before their eyes.

Size didn't equal strength; it never did.

"So what?" Gryme argued with a dark look. "The human might be stronger than we anticipated, but it doesn't change the fact that he is still an outsider and not welcomed here."

"It seems if I want something done, I have to do it myself!" Gryme stated as he stared into the distance with a cold glint.

Shortly after, the High-level Rank 4 True Dragon broke away from the dragon crowd and entered the battle ring.

"Gryme, I..."

"Get the fuck out!" Gryme snapped at Hedwig, slapping him out of the battle ring with a powerful tail sweep. "You're a goddamn embarrassment to us dragons! How dare you let a mere human make a fool out of you! Sit the fuck out there and watch how I do things!"

"I will be your opponent, human!" Gryme declared after shifting his attention to Vaan.

"Alright," Vaan calmly replied, but his eyes narrowed.

He could tell that the Gryme didn't have any good intentions. Cruelness was practically seeping out of his body.

Furthermore, he was a High-level Rank 4 being.

Thus, he couldn't use normal methods to deal with Gryme. His opponent was a little too strong for him this time.

However, defeat wasn't certain.

There were various methods the weak could use to defeat the strong. The real issue was to pick the most effective and efficient method and use it before the opponent could have the advantage.

Boom!

Even before the battle started, Gryme immediately enhanced himself with magic, causing various runes to appear all over his body.

"You will pay for humiliating a dragon, human," Gryme spat in a low tone before Vaan sensed danger the next moment.

Extreme Lightning Flash Step!

Boom!

Vaan quickly retreated with a high-rank movement skill before his original location exploded like a volcanic eruption, sending hot lava of horrendous temperatures into the air.

No doubt, the lava was much hotter than his magma; he would have received serious burns from it.

Although Gryme had initiated the start of the battle with a sneak attack, Vaan didn't complain, nor did he have a reason to besides wanting to make a fool of himself.

As Jergag mentioned, there were no rules, and all methods were permitted as long as no one died in the fight.

In other words, lethal attacks were permitted as long as they didn't kill.

Nevertheless, Gryme didn't give Vaan a chance to catch a break. Right after launching his sneak attack, he quickly pursued Vaan with a powerful flap of his wings.

Although Gryme's dragon body was huge in comparison to Vaan, he was also very nimble.

Even so, Vaan used his high-rank movement skill to avoid Gryme's lethal claws that threatened to shred his body into parts.

"What's wrong, human?! Where's your arrogance now?!" Gryme sneered with ridicule, "All you can do is run like a rat with its tail tucked between its legs!"

"And you, a noble, powerful, and big lizard, can't even land a single blow on this little rat. So who's the bigger joke, I wonder?" Vaan casually retorted, intending to provoke his opponent.

Arrogance and anger clouds one's judgment.

"How dare you!" Gryme roared furiously.

"Heh, am I wrong?" Vaan snickered as he continued his provocation.

Safe to say, it was far too easy to provoke Gryme. The giant lizard's discrimination against humans was too strong.

Any little thing could upset the big lizard, not to mention direct insults and contempt.

"I'll kill you!"

Gryme issued a dragon roar that shook Vaan's soul, stunning him briefly before taking the chance to close the distance between them.

Vaan's eyes narrowed instantly.

Although Gryme's dragon roar was nothing compared to the ninth dragon lord's, the ability to stun him was dangerous nonetheless.

In a split second, he immediately decided to cause countless earthen rocks in the area to explode into thick dust clouds, covering his figure within.

"Do you think you can hide, you little rat?!" Gryme blindly charged into the dust cloud, unaware portions of the harmless dust clouds were transmuted into various powdered metals.

Some were extremely sharp, while others easily melted at room temperature but retained their solidity due to Kinetic Energy Manipulation.

Nevertheless, Gryme inhaled a bunch of powdered metals before his powerful wings swept the dust clouds out of the area and cleared the view.

However, Vaan had already created distance, appearing over a hundred yards away with his Extreme Lightning Flash Steps.

Roar!

Gryme briefly stunned Vaan with another powerful dragon roar.



If Vaan's mental resistance weren't high, he would have been stunned for a longer period, making the situation much more dangerous.

Fortunately, his mental resistance was very high.

Even so, against a mana-infused sound attack, plugging his ears wasn't enough to block it from stunning him.

Boom! Boom!

More earthen rocks were gathered and exploded into dust clouds, covering Vaan's presence once more.

Gryme was infuriated by the repeated tricks but chased after Vaan nonetheless, inhaling more doses of Vaan's powdered metals in the process.

As Gryme moved rapidly in his pursuit, the sharp metals were causing microscopic cuts throughout his internal system and hastening the spread of mercury into his system.

After the game of cat and mouse was repeated several times, Gryme's wings finally didn't move the way he wanted, causing him to plunge into the magma sea.

A moment later, he resurfaced from the magma sea with alarm.

Within half an hour, Gryme experienced various motor movement problems, vision and hearing impairment, and different levels of paralysis throughout his body.

Furthermore, the symptoms only became more severe with time.

He was incapacitated and couldn't fight.

"Something is wrong with my body! What the hell did you do to me, human?!" Gryme immediately blamed Vaan for his predicament. He coughed up blood the next moment before roaring, "How dare you use poison!"

"Oh, how the tables have turned, eh? I guess mercury is still effective, even against dragons," Vaan casually commented before saying, "I suggest you concede defeat before your situation becomes life-threatening."

"I am a proud dragon! I would rather die than yield to a despicable human like you!" Gryme roared furiously.

#### Chapter 313: Jergag's Lecture

Although Gryme refused to yield, Vaan took no further action against the dragon. After all, there was no need.

His opponent had been incapacitated and unable to continue fighting; his victory was conclusive.

Gryme had inhaled a substantial amount of mercury and various other toxic metals. His condition would only worsen with time.

Of course, Gryme could use magic to cure himself, but only when he was in the right state of mind.

In his current state of mercury madness, he couldn't think straight or move according to his will, let alone use magic.

Nevertheless, Vaan was curious about whether the effects of toxic metals would persist even after the end of the transmutation period or not.

"You would rather die than yield? Do you think your death is worth it?" Vaan coolly asked before saying, "Your hatred has exceeded mere discrimination against my race. However, I don't remember doing anything to incur such hatred from you. So what the hell is your problem?"

Nevertheless, Gryme's mind deteriorated to the point that he could no longer form coherent words, not even in the dragon tongue.

No man or dragon understood his jibber-jabbers.

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Meanwhile, Jergag and the rest of the dragon crowd remained outside the battle ring; none of them had the intention to interfere in the fight unless the involved parties requested it.

At the same time, Jergag was brooding over Vaan's previous words.

'Old heroes are forgotten as new ones rise,' Jergag mused with a frown.

Although he no longer took on any leading positions in the tribe, many dragons still respected and listened to him due to his seniority, strength, and past contributions.

Thus, it was new to him that dragons from the younger generations repeatedly ignored his words and disobeyed his will.

Nevertheless, he was still a Peak-level Rank 4 being. Therefore, for these dragons to disregard him despite not being on his level showed that they had no respect for him.

Even if he wanted to return to the earth and reunite with the Fire Dragon God in the afterlife, he didn't want to be forgotten like this.

'This old dragon can't leave the world just yet. The tribe still needs my guidance,' Jergag inwardly sighed.

Perhaps the Fire Dragon Tribe had been powerful and respected once upon a time, but that was in the past when the Fire Dragon God was still alive.

Back then, they could live with their heads held high and command respect and reverence from myriads of races with just their presence.

But now?

Now, they were living out their days like turtles hiding in their shells to avoid the eyes of their predators, who seek to subjugate and hunt them for their precious materials.

"A proud dragon, huh? How stupid. There's nothing great about being a dragon nowadays. Our dragon tribe's glorious days are long over. Showing off our great strength to the local humans doesn't make us great, only the bigger bullies."

"Senior Jergag...?" the surrounding dragons shifted their attention to the elderly dragon, uncertain whether Jergag was speaking to them or himself.

However, they were affected by the elderly dragons' mood and couldn't help but listen attentively.

"It's time to wake up. We are not proud dragons," Jergag stated.

"Perhaps, we were in the past, but those days are over. There is nothing great about us today. This old dragon has seen more development from the humans than he has from the dragon tribe in the past three hundred years. Given time, humans will rise and surpass us—if we continue to hide in our shells and stagnate, that is."

"Dragons need to stop living in the glory of the past. If you want to relive the glorious days of the dragon tribe, then rise, grow, become stronger, and surpass your ancestors. You can be the herald bearers of a new golden age for the dragon tribe, but not like this. Bullying weaker humans won't achieve that."

"Let today's fight be a lesson for you all. Even if your opponents are weaker, they can still defeat you. So put aside your arrogance and pride. We are no longer great. I repeat, we are no longer great," Jergag reminded.

After the elderly dragon's short speech, the surrounding dragons all became depressed, as if the elderly dragon's words had struck them right in their sore spots.

"Actually, Gryme isn't usually like this, Senior Jergag," a Mid-level Rank 4 dragon mentioned with a depressive sigh before continuing, "Being a proud dragon was just an excuse. Gryme just wanted to seek justice for the kid that got killed by the black witches. That kid was someone he knew."

"Is that so?" Jergag coolly glanced at the dragon and said, "And what the hell does Vaan have to do with it? Justice was already served. The killer died in the most gruesome way and at the hands of another human, no less."

"Yes, that's true. However, it was still unsatisfactory precisely because it wasn't done by us dragons. Thus, Gryme is taking his anger and grievance out on other humans," the dragon explained.

"That's no excuse for poor behavior," Jergag strictly stated before saying, "If a black dragon killed someone you know, would you kill the black dragon's entire family and tribe?"

"Well... no," the dragon replied awkwardly.

"And yet, you find Gryme finding trouble with Vaan to be acceptable because he is a human?" Jergag asked before saying, "Can't say I'm not disappointed. This old dragon expected better from all of you."

After getting reprimanded, the younger dragons all lowered their heads in shame.

"You're all lived several hundred to a few thousand years, but all you have to boast about are your strength. You all better focus on training your mentality," Jergag lectured.

"Yes, Senior Jergag," the dragons quickly complied. "We will keep your words in mind—"

"Arghhhh!"

Gryme's distant cry suddenly caught everyone's attention before they stared inside the battle ring and saw Gryme writhing in pain.

"This stubborn lad..." Jergag uttered with a frown before saying, "This fight has been dragged on for too long. This old dragon will stop it. Otherwise, another dragon will die today."

Shortly after Jergag swept the crowd and saw no disagreements among them, he immediately flew inside the battle ring.

Chapter 314: Narvim's Insights

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## First Peak, Dragon Summit

As the nine dragon lords continued with their tribe's agendas, they eventually excused the Witch Mother from their meeting.

"I apologize for asking you to return so we can continue our tribe's meeting privately, Lady Ophelia. I will invite you to my peak and act as a proper host at a more opportune time," Astarot promised.

"It's fine, Lord Astarot." Ophelia curtsied in her black dress with a slight smile and said, "I still have other matters to take care of, so this works fine for me."

"Thank you for your understanding, Lady Ophelia." Astarot nodded with acknowledgment before turning to the ninth dragon lord. "Send her back to her place, Lord Narvim. And be quick. We aren't done here."

"Alright," Lord Narvim replied before he stood up from his dragon throne, made his way over to Ophelia, and ripped open a tear in space. Then he gestured, "After you, Lady Ophelia."

Shortly after, Lord Narvim stepped inside the spatial tear and disappeared with the Witch Mother. Moments later, a new spatial tear appeared in the same spot before Lord Narvim calmly exited.

Nevertheless, the atmosphere suddenly turned solemn the moment Lord Narvim returned to the Dragon Summit without Ophelia Tempest.

"Recount everything that happened during your meeting with Lady Ophelia, Lord Narvim. And without leaving out any details," Astarot strictly ordered.

"Alright, Lord Astarot," Lord Narvim acknowledged with a nod.

He wasn't allowed to return to his seat but was forced to stay on the center platform under the stern gazes of the other eight dragon lords like he was a criminal getting convicted.

Nevertheless, after the eight dragon lords finished listening to Lord Narvim's recount, their gazes all softened with pity.

"You've lost your edge, Lord Narvim," Astarot said with a sigh before mentioning, "You used to be the most arrogant, proud, and powerful dragon among the nine of us."

"No one doubted your potential. Everyone strongly believed you had the greatest chance to achieve divinity and lead the tribe to greatness once more. However, you've completely changed after one mistake cost you your daughter."

"You weren't this conservative," Astarot stated.

"That's right, Lord Narvim," Tyrvin agreed before adding, "Lady Ophelia's threat wouldn't have worked on you. Spreading the news of dragons would affect us, but not as bad as it would affect the Black Witch Society if we spread the news of their headquarters."

"Furthermore, you had the absolute advantage in strength and magic. If you had really wanted to stop the spatial witches from escaping, you would have locked down the space and prevented them from even using spatial magic to escape."

"But there's no way you didn't know this..." Tyrvin suddenly frowned before asking, "Why did you still lower yourself to make a deal with the black witches?"

"Perhaps he was afraid because Lady Ophelia was a Rank 6 being in her past life?" the eighth dragon lord, Khalessi, casually spoke with a look of indifference. "He does lack a spine these days."

Narvim smiled wryly at his wife before returning his attention to the other dragon lords.

"I have seen the strength of the black witches. Although they are persecuted by most of the human countries on the continent, there's no doubt that they are a force to be reckoned with among humans," Narvim calmly mentioned.

"If we exclude the seven Transcendent Witches from the picture, then the Black Witch Society's witches have made more progress than any other witch on the continent, thanks to Lady Ophelia's knowledge, no doubt. Having them around will accelerate the progress of other witches."

"Furthermore, if they can help us deal with Gehenna's Great Devils, why should I wipe them out? I believe a win-win situation is much better than a situation where both sides lose," Narvim stated.

"Is that your excuse for chickening out when you found out Lady Ophelia was a Rank 6 being that served the Storm Calamity Witch?" Khaleesi casually asked.

"That's enough, Lord Khalessi," Astarot ordered.

They had already heard Lord Narvim's recount; he had made an agreement with the Black Witch Society before he even found out Lady Ophelia's origins.

Thus, Lord Khaleesi's words made no sense; she was simply speaking out of spite.

"Hmph," Khaleesi snorted and spoke no further.

"Well, Lord Khaleesi isn't exactly wrong." Narvim wryly smiled before saying, "It's true that I made a deal before learning about Lady Ophelia's origins, but it was also true that learning about Lady Ophelia's origins made me feel more certain of the choice I've made."

"Lady Ophelia is an ambitious person. You would all be wrong to believe everything she said. Contract Magic isn't foolproof. There are always loopholes," Narvim mentioned.

"Are you saying Lady Ophelia does have a way to contact the Storm Calamity Witch, who should be in Nightmare, a greater realm that is more powerful and distant than Gehenna, Lord Narvim?" Astarot asked with a deep look.

"Even if she doesn't have a way to contact the Storm Calamity Witch, the Storm Calamity Witch must have a way to contact her," Narvim stated before adding, "Otherwise, why would she let one of her close retainers reincarnate?"

"That makes sense. The Storm Calamity Witch is, after all, a Rank 7 being. There's no way dragons of our level would know the extent of her capabilities," Astarot nodded with acknowledgment before speaking, "Continue, Lord Narvim."

"Furthermore, Lady Ophelia, herself, was a Rank 6 being. We would be too arrogant to say we understand what such a person could be thinking or scheming," Narvim mentioned.



"However, I don't believe an ambitious and knowledgeable witch like her would put herself in a disadvantageous position without anything to rely on. I am more willing to believe she had put herself in a vulnerable position to test us and see our stances."

"If we had been hostile, perhaps it wouldn't just be Gehenna that we have to worry about. No, it would become the least of our concerns. Nightmare would become the bigger problem," Narvim stated.

"A sound argument; you've made your point, Lord Narvim. I apologize for reprimanding you earlier. After hearing your reasons, I believe you have made the right choice," Lord Astarot acknowledged he was too quick in judging Lord Narvim's decision. "Your claws might have lost their edge, but your mind has broadened, Lord—"

"Milords, there's trouble!" a dragon suddenly flew to the Dragon Summit and interrupted the first dragon lord's words.

#### Chapter 315: Narvim & Khaleesi

The dragon lords' hearts all tightened when they witnessed a dragon interrupt their meeting urgently and announce trouble.

Naturally, they immediately assumed the worse.

"The Great Devils descended? Are we under attack? No, that shouldn't be... I would have already known if they did," Astarot frowned before asking, "What trouble?"

"It's Gryme, Lord Astarot. He challenged Lord Narvim's esteemed guest and stubbornly refused to yield when he lost. Although Senior Jergag interfered and ended the fight, Gryme's life is still in danger," the dragon reported.

"So it has nothing to do with Gehenna." Astarot sighed before he turned to the eighth and ninth dragon lords. "Lord Khaleesi, Lord Narvim. You two go and deal with it. They are your nephew and guest."

"Understood, Lord Astarot," Narvim and Khaleesi answered.

Shortly after, they took off under the informant's lead, descending to First Peak before they entered the land of fire.

Within minutes, they reached their destination and landed in the magma next to Jergag, capturing everyone's attention with their grand presence and arrival at the same time.

Along the way, the informant filled them in on the details.

"Lord Khaleesi. Lord Narvim," Jergag greeted the two dragon lords with a strange look, finding it rare to see the two together nowadays.

"Un." The two dragon lords acknowledged Jergag's greeting before Khaleesi glanced down at Gryme's condition and asked, "How is his condition?"

"I've stopped his condition from deteriorating any further, but he'll need a specialist to nurse him back to health," Jergag casually answered.

"How vicious," Khaleesi studied Gryme's condition with a frown before she nonchalantly shrugged it off. "Well, that's what he gets for being stubborn. Send him to Lord Bronte for treatment, and let us end this matter here."

"You're not going to pursue Vaan for putting your nephew in such a state?" Narvim asked with surprise.

"Hmph!" Khaleesi glanced back at her husband with a snort and said, "And why would I do that? Gryme challenged someone and lost. He reaped what he sowed. So why would I hold your guest accountable for his condition? Gryme isn't dead, and there are no rules to duels."

"Furthermore, even if I wanted to punish your guest, would you allow it?" Khaleesi added.

"No," Narvim firmly answered.

Although Khaleesi expected such an answer, her heart still trembled when she heard him say it so firmly. She was slightly hurt that her husband chose an outsider over her nephew.

"Hmph! Then why do you still need to ask?" Khaleesi coldly snorted before storming off.

"I..." Narvim was at a loss for words before he shook his head with a sigh and turned his attention to Vaan. "Although you used poison, you managed to beat Gryme. I'm impressed, Vaan."

"Never mind that. Shouldn't you go after her, Lord Narvim? It seemed like the two of you had a lot to talk about. You should settle your business first, Lord Narvim," Vaan suggested.

By studying their expressions, it wasn't hard to tell the two dragon lords shared a special yet estranged relationship.

"It's no use. My words won't reach her, and she wouldn't understand," Narvim gave up before even trying.

Vaan was a bit speechless yet amused at the same time.

"Based on my impression, Lord Narvim seemed to be a dragon full of wisdom and capable of many things. But I guess even you have something you're bad at," Vaan slightly chuckled and said, "For example, you're helpless in your relationship."

"How can you expect the other party to understand if you don't say anything? Don't you know the key to a relationship is communication? I don't know the history between you two, but nothing will change if you don't do anything about it."

"If you guys don't talk, no one will understand the other," Vaan stated.

Naturally, the ninth dragon lord understood that.

However, knowing it was one thing and being able to do it was another. The ninth dragon lord had the courage to do many things except confront his own wife.

"I didn't want to say anything since it wasn't my business, but how long do you plan to keep this up, Narvim? You've already lost your daughter once. Do you plan to lose your wife as well?" Jergag spoke up.

"Senior Jergag...?" Lord Narvim uttered with surprise before asking with a frown, "What do you mean?"

"What do you mean what do I mean? Obviously, Khaleesi is a lovely dragon. If you're not going to do anything about your relationship, another dragon might steal your wife's heart," Jergag stated.

"None of the other dragon lords are inferior to you, and even the younger dragons possess more vigor than you. Khaleesi has a lot of admirers, you know? Who knows? Maybe one of them will be bold enough to court her and win her heart."

"Who dares to court this Lord's wife?! Khaleesi isn't like that!" Lord Narvim became agitated due to Jergag's words.

"Who dares, huh? Well, your prestige is not the same as it was a thousand years ago. People change, not to mention dragons. If you don't care for your wife, others will, Narvim," Jergag stated.

"I..." Narvim's heart trembled before he quickly bid his leave, "I have to go, Senior Jergag. We'll talk another time."

Shortly after, Jergag chuckled as he watched the ninth dragon lord leave the land of fire in a panic to chase after his wife.

"Senior Jergag sure has a way with words," Vaan commented with a smile.

"Hahaha, sometimes true courage comes from one's fears. A bit of goading does wonders sometimes," Jergag chuckled before saying, "Nevertheless, I'm sure you had something similar in mind. This old dragon apologizes for stealing your credit, Vaan."

"Never mind that," Vaan shook his head before asking, "Will any more issues arise due to this incident?"

"No, this was just a small matter. You don't have to worry about anything, Vaan. As I said before, as long as no one died in the duel, it doesn't matter what methods you use to win," Jergag stated before adding, "Other dragons just like to make a big deal out of a small matter because it happened between a dragon and a human this time."

"I see. That's reassuring to hear," Vaan nodded.

"This old dragon doubts any more dragons will find trouble with you after this incident. You have already proven your strength and viciousness. I'm sure they don't want to end up like Gryme," Jergag guessed before asking, "Will you continue to train or...?"

"I'll head back for today and check on the others, Senior Jergag," Vaan decided.

"Alright," Jergag acknowledged with a nod.

Shortly after, the elderly dragon offered Vaan a ride back to Ninth Peak's guest building.

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Eight Peak

"Khaleesi, wait for me! Let us have a proper talk!" Narvim hollered.

After chasing his wife all the way to her mountain peak, Khaleesi finally stopped and turned her head around to confront him.

"After several hundred years of silence, you finally want to have a proper talk? Why now, of all times? What about the time you got our daughter killed, huh? Why didn't you try to talk to me then?"

"I..." Narvim was immediately at a loss for words after hearing Khaleesi's string of questions. Even so, he gritted his teeth to force out a reply, "I was in grief and didn't know how to face you."

"In grief and didn't know how to face me? So that's your excuse?" Khaleesi glared at him, full of emotions, and said, "You wanted a son, but I gave you a daughter. So you raised her like a son and pushed her too hard that it got her killed in Gehenna!"

"However, I've never blamed you for the way you raised her or how you got her killed in Gehenna! I understand Chaos is unpredictable, and anything could happen. I just hate the fact that you never had the courage to face me after everything that had happened, so we could go through our sorrows together!"

"You're our daughter's father, but am I not her mother?! Do you think you were the only one grieving for the loss of our daughter?! And yet, you left me to endure the sadness alone for hundreds of years, you damn coward!" Khaleesi cried as she poured out her bottled-up emotions in the form of tears.

"I..." Narvim admitted that he was wrong. Thus, he couldn't refute her words. "I'm sorry..."

"Sorry? Now, you're sorry?!" Khaleesi gritted her teeth and shouted, "What good is your sorry?!"

"Do you think your sorry will make up for all the tears I've shed alone?! All the disappointment I felt while waiting for you to come and console me?! Would your damn sorry bring our daughter back?!"

"What good is your damn sorry now, Narvim?! Tell me..."

Khaleesi still loved her husband and wanted to forgive him for finally taking the step forward, but all the indignance she felt over the years didn't allow it to happen so easily.

"No, it wouldn't..." Narvim lowered his head with a sad look, too ashamed to face his wife. But then, his eyes suddenly flickered before he looked up with a firm look. "Come with me, Khaleesi. I have a place to show you."

"And why should I follow you just because you said so? Why does the place you want to show me even matter?" Khaleesi asked with a shaky voice due to her overwhelming emotions.

"Because it is related and important to both of us. You will know once you get there. Please, just let me show you, Khaleesi," Narvim pleaded.

Seeing his resolute eyes, Khaleesi eventually consented.

Shortly after, she followed Narvim back to Ninth Peak before they hovered in the sky high above the clouds and out of sight but directly above the guest building.

"What did you want to show me, Narvim?" Khaleesi asked with a glum expression.

"This."

Narvim conjured a screen with magic, revealing a guest room with a person sleeping inside. Khaleesi was baffled by his intention, but she couldn't keep her eyes off the person for some reason.

"I can't bring our daughter back," Narvim firmly stated with a sad look before continuing, "And it might be a coincidence, but I would like to think she found her way back to us instead."

"She is...?" Khaleesi's heart trembled as she understood his implication.

"Eniwse's reincarnation, reborn as a witch among humans," Narvim answered before mentioning, "You know I have special eyes. Thus, it was fairly easy to recognize her."

"Furthermore, I've once cast a forbidden ancient spell on our daughter before she passed away, so she managed to retain her name in the next life. Thanks to that, I was absolutely certain that she was our daughter."

"However, she came to me as an Abomination writhing in pain. I did a lot of research to find the perfect treatment to restore her, but ultimately it was Vaan who treated her by sacrificing his soul force," Narvim explained.

Khaleesi's eyes flickered with understanding before she quietly uttered, "No wonder you treat that human so well..."

Chapter 316: Dragon's Outrage

"Abomination..."

The berserk transformation wasn't something new to Khaleesi or any dragon in the tribe.

Anyone familiar with mana would know about berserk transformation. They would also know that it was limited to witches but everyone who dabbled with mana.

Nevertheless, there were apparent differences; higher mana compatibility equaled higher risk.

After all, magic is the manifestation of one's will given form through mana, and mana better answers to a strong will.

That said, nothing was more dangerous than uncontrollable rage to a mana user.

Khaleesi wasn't sure if her heart could bear it if she had to witness her reincarnated daughter undergoing unimaginable torment every day after finding her.

As such, she was grateful to hear that Vaan had freed her daughter from the Abomination status, even more so since it was done at the cost of his soul force.

"Now that I know Vaan cured our daughter, I find him a lot more pleasant to the eye. If I had known earlier, I wouldn't have minded him teaching that brat Gryme a few more lessons," Khaleesi commented.

However, she suddenly paused shortly after.

She recalled her husband's earlier words about using a forbidden ancient spell on her daughter, and a portion of her resentment towards him was quickly abated.

"The forbidden ancient spell you cast on our daughter... That was the real reason behind your loss of talent and potential, wasn't it?" Khaleesi asked before adding, "Why didn't you mention any of this? Everyone would have..."

"Everyone would have treated me differently?" Narvim smiled slightly before shaking his head and said, "Regardless of the reason, it doesn't change the fact that my potential and talents were exhausted. So other dragons won't just stop looking down on me because of this."



"You should already know what the world is like; it's a place where strength is respected," Narvim added.

Between a Rank 5 True Dragon that could still grow stronger and a Rank 5 True Dragon that had already reached the end of his potential, the difference was clear.

Even if Narvim was still respected as a Rank 5 True Dragon and a Peak Lord, that was as far as other dragons' respect went.

He wasn't comparable to the other Peak Lords, who still had a chance to ascend to Rank 6 in the future.

Khaleesi could not help but let out a long emotional sigh.

"The forbidden ancient spell you used to retain our daughter's name is something that interferes with karma, binding past and present lives. For Rank 5 beings to even activate this kind of spell, you would have to sacrifice soul force..." Khaleesi frowned with concern. "The price you paid wasn't small, Narvim."

"Soul Masters can replenish and increase their soul force, but other beings don't have this ability. As such, losing soul force is equivalent to lowering our level of existence."

"You shouldn't recklessly use this kind of forbidden ancient spell again," Khaleesi advised.

"For our daughter, I would gladly do it again if given another choice," Narvim firmly stated.

Khaleesi's heart trembled.

She could resent her husband, but it was impossible to dislike him. Others can also look down on him, but they have no choice but to respect him.

Nothing was more attractive to her than a father who puts their child's welfare first.

That's why she never had a problem with Narvim raising their daughter like a son until it got their daughter killed. Strength was important in Chaos.

Furthermore, she was raised the same way.

"C'mon, let us head back to Dragon Summit. The other Peak Lords are still waiting for us to return to resume the meeting," Narvim changed the topic.

However, Khaleesi shook her head and said, "Let them wait. I want to watch our daughter for a little longer."

"Alright," Narvim replied with a slight smile as he maintained the magic screen.

Since his wife wished to watch over their reincarnated daughter, he naturally had no complaints. He didn't mind making the other Peak Lords wait and shouldering the blame for it.

Nevertheless, as the two dragon lords watched Eniwse sleep through a magic screen in the clouds, they soon noticed Vaan entering the picture.

"Hm?" Khaleesi slightly frowned.

"Vaan and Eniwse seemed to have already formed a special relationship much earlier than our encounter. Saving Eniwse was also his reason for entering the Thousand Fog Mountains," Narvim explained why a man was entering their daughter's sleeping quarters.

"Oh," Khaleesi's frown immediately relaxed, and her vigilance was replaced by interest and fondness.

"In other words, Vaan is basically our son-in-law... And he is also a Soul Master. Not bad. I approve of this relationship. The more I look at him, the fonder I am. Our daughter's partner can't be someone incompetent."

"Mm, this person is under my protection now. If another dragon causes trouble for him, they will have to face my wrath," Khaleesi declared before her eyes suddenly lit up with excitement. "Look, Narvim. Our daughter has woken up!"

"I can see," Narvim calmly nodded before saying, "It looks like she has fully recovered after a good rest."

"Look how intimate they are. Their relationship is so good! Oh my, our daughter looks so happy," Khaleesi commented excitedly before she suddenly paused with a frown. "Hold on... Why are they taking their clothes off?"

As the following scene on the magic screen unfolded, Khaleesi's expression quickly turned darker.

"Fuck! What is that bastard doing to our daughter? How unsightly and repulsive! I'm going to kill that scoundrel!" Khaleesi cursed.

"Ahem!"

Narvim dispelled the magic screen with a dry and awkward cough before stopping his wife from descending and rampaging below.

"The union might be a sacred act during matrimony for us, dragons, but humans are more open and casual about these things, Khaleesi..." Narvim explained with a wry smile, hiding his distress.

"Didn't you just say Vaan has your protection? Yet, you want to kill him for performing the union with our daughter?"

"I..." Khaleesi was at a loss for words briefly before she glared at Narvim. "Hold on, shouldn't you, the father, be the one mad about this? Just take a look at our daughter! She shouldn't be older than half a century!"

"Our precious baby is practically a fetus! And yet, someone is already performing the union with her! How is that acceptable?!" Khaleesi barked.

"Fuck." Narvim's eye twitched before he replied, "Now that you mentioned it, that does sound very infuriating."

Chapter 317: Interrupted Moment

Ninth Peak, Guest Building

After returning from the land of fire, Vaan noticed the other ladies were all out and about, experiencing the dragon culture.

Considering it was a rare opportunity to interact with the secluded dragons, he didn't find it surprising that no one wanted to waste time resting in the guest building.

Nevertheless, since everyone else was out, he decided to check on Eniwse.

With a quick scan of the guest building with Omni-Sense, Vaan quickly located Eniwse's room before he made his way over.

Perhaps because Eniwse wasn't an Abomination for a very long time compared to Aeliana, her recovery was very swift.

When Vaan stepped into her room, Eniwse immediately sensed his presence and woke up despite not being a very light sleeper.

Of course, it was also partly due to their connection.

"How are you feeling?" Vaan asked with a smile as he sat down on the edge of the bed and supported Eniwse in sitting up with care.

"Physically, there isn't any issue. But, mentally, I feel out of touch with the world. A part of me still finds everything to be unreal," Eniwse replied after some deliberation before turning her head to look into his eyes directly. "I didn't think I could return to normal after losing control."

"When have you ever had a problem I couldn't solve?" Vaan casually said with a confident smile, which Eniwse found especially attractive.

It was new to her.

Vaan had always been a determined person with confidence in his knowledge. But the confidence he revealed back then and now was completely different.

There was a sort of strength behind his confidence.

"There's so much I want to ask, but for now, I'm just happy to be able to see you again, Vaan. I thought I lost you," Eniwse rested her head on Vaan's shoulder before whispering her desire, "Love me... can you?"

Vaan slightly smiled.

Shortly after, he lifted her chin and stole her lips with a soft and gentle kiss that soon became passionate as Eniwse responded to his show of affection with her eyes closed.

Although she closed her eyes to savor Vaan's gentleness, she desired more. Thus, she actively pried open his lips and showed off her experience.

She was no stranger to more passionate kisses, thanks to Vaan.

"Mmm..."

Eniwse subconsciously uttered a soft moan of pleasure as her body quivered with euphoria, overjoyed by Vaan's simple touch.

It was better than she remembered—or rather, her body seemed to have become more sensitive to his touch, not that she hated it, though.

In fact, she enjoyed it a lot.

As they took turns stripping each other's clothes off, Eniwse's impressive mounds were revealed for Vaan to feast his eyes on.

Although they were bigger than Vaan last remembered, he wasn't one to discriminate or favor one woman's breast size over the other.

They each had their own unique beauty and strength.

In Eniwse's case, her watermelons were quite soft and bouncy despite being abnormally big. Vaan's in-depth knowledge of the pleasure points on women's breasts may not be applicable to her.

As such, curiosity got the better of Vaan.

He couldn't help but study Eniwse's huge melons as he played with them, giving them plenty of soft rubs, squeezes, pinches, licks, and nibbles in various spots to record her reactions.

It was like he was fine-tuning the strings of a guitar.

Nevertheless, his casual touches weren't something that Eniwse could endure in silence.

"Ahn~!" Eniwse softly cried with joy.

Her body spasmed from achieving her first orgasm despite Vaan only casually playing with her breasts.

Knowing he didn't actively try to pleasure her, she felt slightly embarrassed and ashamed to have reached climax so easily.

She thought she had become relatively experienced and accustomed to Vaan's art of pleasure, but she felt like a young maiden going through her first spring again.

"Don't just focus on my chest, Vaan~!" Eniwse wanted to shift Vaan's focus elsewhere with a firm stance, but her voice came out soft and mellow, full of womanly charms.

Ordinary men could easily become excited and aroused by hearing it.

"Alright," Vaan smiled.

Although he hadn't used the Heavenly Massage, Eniwse's dragon cave was already soaking wet with love nectar and ready to receive the dragon.

Any of his casual touches brought her body unimaginable pleasure, a side effect of exceeding the fifth level of pleasure, no doubt.

"Ahnnn~!"

Eniwse's erotic voice resounded throughout the room the moment Vaan slid his bulging rod into her dragon cave, connecting their bodies.

In that instant, a powerful and electrifying wave of pleasure swept over her body, seemingly stimulating all her cells into waking up.

Abundant amounts of mana were naturally drawn towards their location, becoming concentrated in a short period and enhancing their dual-practice experience.

"This is it~! I missed this feeling. No, it's even more incredible than I remembered~!" Eniwse commented euphorically as her huge mounds moved up and down with each of Vaan's pumps.

Nevertheless, as the two surrendered their minds to lust and delved deeper into the sea of carnal pleasure, the skies above the guest building suddenly roared with thunder.

Rumble!

Following the sudden streak of blue lightning, the cluster of clouds in the sky quickly darkened before a heavy downpour of rain eventually descended.

The bombardment of raindrops created clitters and clatters, but the couple inside the guest building didn't seem to mind nor spare any thought regarding the sudden storm that arrived without warning.

They simply wanted to enjoy their moment together.

Rumble!

Another roar of thunder resounded, more powerful than the last, shaking the earth and threatening to tear the sky asunder.

After the first came a second, a third, and a fourth, each crackle of lightning in the sky was more powerful than the last, shaking the earth and interrupting the couple's moments.

Eniwse and Vaan had no choice but to halt their dual-practice session; they couldn't keep ignoring the abnormal weather.

"What the hell is wrong with this weather? Those thunder roars are abnormally powerful; the most powerful I've ever heard and felt. Is this weather normal in the dragon tribe, or does the weather have something against us?" Eniwse wondered with a big frown, clearly upset by the repeated interruption.

Vaan was also baffled by the abnormal weather, which had no sign of arriving prior to him entering the guest building.

However, he recalled an instance when he felt like someone was spying on their room earlier, and his eyes flickered.

He couldn't help but feel amused when he thought of a possibility.

"Who knows?" Vaan nonchalantly shrugged before replying with a mischievous smile, "Suppose the weather has something against us; it can continue to be angry with us. Let us continue, Eniwse."

"Mm." Eniwse nodded with a slight blush.

Rumble! Rumble!

### Chapter 318: Strong Suspicions

Meanwhile, up in the sky, Khaleesi continued to be outraged by Vaan's carnal indulgence with her baby daughter.

Although she tried not to be vocal about it, the outrage of a Rank 5 being caused the weather to change drastically.

It almost seemed like the sky was helping her express her raging emotions.

"This is ridiculous! How can humans engage in such a sacred act so shamefully and vulgarly?! There is no decency or elegance in their union! This is blasphemy! That little bastard dares to make our precious baby sound so vulgar...!" Khaleesi gnashed her teeth gratingly.



Although she no longer saw what was happening, she could still eavesdrop and understand the situation with sound magic.

"Calm down, Khaleesi. Although our daughter is making such vulgar noises, the union she is performing with Vaan might not be as indecent and bad as it seems," Narvim tried to pacify his wife, but at the same time, he was also trying to convince himself.

"Oh, yeah?" Khaleesi glared at Narvim and spat, "Then, why don't you take a look and see if it is or not!"

"Alright," Narvim calmly acknowledged with a nod.

However, just as the frames of the new magic screen were formed, Khaleesi interrupted Narvim's spell with a resounding smack on the back of his head.

Bam!

"Are you fucking insane, Narvim?! Just because I asked you to take a look, it doesn't mean you should actually take a look! That's our daughter down there! How dare you try to peek at her naked body, you sick pervert!" Khaleesi cursed.

"I..." Narvim was immediately at a loss for words and almost coughed up blood from indignance after listening to his wife's scolding. "Nonsense! Why would this Lord perve on his daughter?! Human clothes are mere accessories, made necessary due to their material greed."

"Do you see us dragons or any other beasts wearing anything, Khaleesi?" Narvim snorted grumpily.

"How ridiculous." Khaleesi snickered and said, "How can you even compare dragons and humans? Our cultures are different."

"Humans are fragile. Thus, even such weak fabrics and clothes provide small protections to their body. In contrast, we dragons have powerful bodies, so their clothes are only cheap decorations to us."

"Hmph!" Narvim snorted and said, "If you're not going to compare dragons and humans, then you shouldn't compare their age either."

"Humans live shorter lifespans than us dragons, so their perspective of time is different. Likewise, they also grow at a different rate compared to us dragons. Our daughter might still seem like a fetus to you, but she's already a fully matured woman to the rest of the humans."

"Thus, there's no reason for you to be so upset with what she is doing, even if you are not used to it. Supposedly, the union is very casual and common among humans," Narvim argued with a rueful smile.

Even he wasn't used to seeing humans dual-practice, let alone involving his reincarnated daughter. But at least he had more control over his emotions than his wife.

"Of course, I know that! That's why I am only complaining and not interfering!" Khaleesi grumbled as she somewhat calmed down.

"Not interfering, huh?" Narvim wryly smiled before commenting, "I believe this crazy weather is already causing plenty of interference."

Khaleesi's expression became slightly awkward after she heard that.

(Lord Narvim. Lord Khaleesi. If you two are so free that you have time to spy on human activities, then this Lord assumes you two have already settled the issue. Hurry back to Dragon Summit at once. We are all waiting!)

The first dragon lord's voice resounded throughout the nine peaks of the dragon tribe, exposing Narvim and Khaleesi's sneaky activity.

As such, they were immediately ashamed after getting called out.

The only saving grace that stopped them from completely losing face in front of the humans was that the first dragon lord spoke in the dragon tongue.

Thus, the humans wouldn't have known the contents of the first dragon lord's message.

"Haiz," Narvim softly sighed and said, "Let us return to Dragon Summit."

"Alright," Khaleesi replied while hiding her embarrassment.

Shortly after, the two dragon lords left the airspace.

...

Little did they know, Vaan had been studying the dragon tongue since his arrival and had made quite a fair bit of progress.

Although he didn't understand the full content of the dragon message, he made out several keywords.

'Lord Narvim... Lord Khaleesi... Spy... Settled issued... Hurry back... Waiting...' Vaan pieced together the words before his eyes flickered with understanding.

'So, it was Lord Narvim and Lord Khalessi. One or both of them must be responsible for the sudden weather change.'

'As for the reason why...'

Vaan glanced down at Eniwse, who was getting pumped from behind, doggy-style, by him while immersing herself in a sea of pleasure and mana.

If any of the dragon lords had seen the scene with spectacles, their lenses would have surely cracked due to the unsightly position.

Nevertheless, Vaan's suspicions grew as he felt a stronger connection between Eniwse and the dragons.

'Perhaps a witch's Abomination form isn't connected to their idea of strength but something else on a deeper level? Their soul? A past life?' Vaan wondered.

Although he had strong suspicions regarding Eniwse's connection with the dragon tribe, he didn't jump to conclusions.

Even so, he had a solid basis that suggested that the two were connected.

After all, Eniwse's second Specialized Magic was called Dragonification, not Wyvern-type Transformation or anything else.

Furthermore, her second elemental attribute was also fire, which matched with the red dragon tribe.

It would be strange not to put the two and two together.

...

Several hours later, when Eniwse depleted her stamina, Vaan settled her in bed before he cleaned himself, wore a fresh set of blue and black clothes, then made his way out of the room.

He quickly decided to look for the others, seeing how they weren't back to rest despite the passage of time.

The starry skies above the nine peaks were beautiful during the night after the thunderous clouds were cleared from the area.

Astoria was situated at the highest point of Ninth Peak. Thus, she was the easiest and quickest to be spotted by him.

After Vaan made his way over, he noticed she was staring into the starry night sky absentmindedly.

#### Chapter 319: Astoria's Thoughts

"You look a little lost, Headmaster Astoria. What appears to be on your mind?" Vaan casually inquired shortly after arriving next to her near the edge of Ninth Peak's entrance to the land of fire revealed below.

"Teacher Raphna, you're here," Astoria acknowledged Vaan's presence with a nod before shaking her head. "It's nothing much. It's just that all this time, I've been fighting the demons under the assumption that if we don't win, humans would either go extinct or get enslaved by them."

"However, I've learned that there are more humans throughout Chaos and possibly among the stars. And among such humans, there are individuals even more powerful than the Gehenna's Great Devils. Thus, I am a little lost as to what to do from here."

"Even if we lose to Gehenna, there are still humans living more prosperous lives out there than us," Astoria mentioned with a blank look.

"Do you feel that what you've done for the human race up until now doesn't hold much meaning anymore, Headmaster Astoria?" Vaan calmly asked.

"I know there was meaning in what I've done, Teacher Raphna," Astoria firmly stated before adding, "However, learning there are other humans out there has certainly weakened my determination. The situation doesn't seem as desperate."

"That's only if you only consider the human race in its entirety." Vaan smiled slightly and said, "Maybe it's time you stop thinking about others and start thinking for yourself, Headmaster Astoria."

"I'm sure you're already aware, but we are currently living on borrowed time. Should the Gehenna's Great Devils suddenly decide to invade our world with their full force, we hardly have the power to resist at all. We would have no choice but to forfeit our lives as we know them."

"However, you see, I want to be in control of my life. Thus, regardless of whether there are other humans out there or not, I will still be doing everything I can to win up until the end," Vaan firmly stated.

If there were one thing he learned from working in a black company in his past life, it would be that if one had the ability to rise above others, do it; don't settle for the bottom position and never put one's life in another's hand to dictate.

With the world being ruled by the strong, believing in the compassion of others was a ticket to a short life.

"You want to be in control of your life, huh?" Astoria dwelled on Vaan's words before uttering, "You have a strong attachment to life, Teacher Raphna. However, the same cannot be said about me—"

Shortly after she spoke, she suddenly paused.

Thinking back on her life, even before Gehenna's connection brought mana to the world and changed everything, she had always thought about the people.

She never spared much thought for herself; it was how she was raised.

Astoria appeared a little lost in thought.

"If you can't live for yourself, then live for me, Headmaster Astoria," Vaan suddenly said boldly, almost sounding like a confession. Nevertheless, he continued, "I naturally have a strong attachment to life. We are just specks of dust in this infinitely vast world. There's still so much to learn, so much to discover."

"Yet, human life is not long enough to experience everything the world has to offer—or so I thought. However, I've come to learn that even humans can become gods and immortals. Thus, that is what I now seek. The eternal path will give me the lifespan required to journey through the infinite realms and find the answers to all the questions my curious mind can conjure."

"Still, I don't doubt that such a path comes with solitude and loneliness if I don't have a companion to accompany me. I wonder if you would care to join me on such an endeavor, Headmaster Astoria?" Vaan gazed at her with a serious question.

"It almost sounds like a proposal," Astoria casually commented with a slight smile before saying with a more solemn look, "However, I can't give you an immediate answer, Teacher Raphna."

"Considering we are far from being capable enough to travel the myriad realms and stars freely, it sounds nothing more than a dream. And interesting as it may sound, I'm not so sure I can put everything behind me and leave to travel the vast world."

"A fair point," Vaan calmly acknowledged with a nod before saying, "Nevertheless, it's good to have a dream. It gives us a sense of purpose and something to work towards."

"You won't ever feel lost if you have a dream you truly wish to realize, Headmaster Astoria," Vaan stated with a smile.

"A dream, huh?" Astoria quietly muttered to herself with a thoughtful look.

She had no dream, only responsibilities imparted by others. She truly hasn't been living life for herself all this time. Even protecting Vaan was just part of that responsibility to the human race.

"A dream... I guess it is good to have one. Thanks, Teacher Raphna. It has been pleasant talking to you tonight," Astoria stated with a smile before sighing, "Unfortunately, none of what we do here matters."

Every memory related to our time in the dragon tribe will be wiped once we decide to leave," Astoria mentioned.

"Not necessarily, Headmaster Astoria," Vaan shook his head and said, "Lord Narvim mentioned that those that overcome the second stage in the land of fire's Trial by Fire are allowed to retain their memories."

"I've previously expressed my intention to challenge the Trial by Fire, and my mind has not changed since then," Vaan stated.

"I can't allow you to do that, Teacher Raphna," Astoria firmly objected with a serious look before mentioning, "Even Her Majesty barely made it out of the Trial by Fire alive despite her great power. A person of your level will only throw away your life by attempting it. I won't allow it."

"Oh? So you've also heard about Her Majesty challenging the Trial by Fire from the dragons in the tribe," Vaan commented with understanding before he casually smiled. "Nevertheless, you should have known what kind of person I am by now."

"I don't gamble with my life, and I don't take unnecessary risks," Vaan confidently stated before adding, "I don't have enough lives for that."

#### Chapter 320: Eniwse's Idea

The Trial by Fire didn't have a restriction on the number of attempts. So long as one was alive, they could challenge the Trial by Fire as often as they wanted.

In other words, it was just a high-level training ground that offered great danger and rewards.

Vaan naturally wouldn't charge to the end of the second stage blindly; he planned to test the waters and adapt. Only then would he advance.

Astoria realized Vaan's intention before she stopped objecting.

Despite knowing Vaan could think and care for himself, she still worried for his safety and objected subconsciously.

It didn't matter how capable he was; she would still worry.

Vaan was an invaluable asset to humanity—or so she constantly told herself. However, she had to admit that it wasn't the sole reason for her concern.

Whether she liked it or not, she had feelings for him.

She, who has lived three centuries, was attracted to someone who has only lived two decades. She would be old enough to be his ancestor if they still lived in the old era.

Perhaps she was still single because she had never found anyone young and capable like Vaan. That said, she wasn't exactly sure if she was truly attracted to younger men or not.

After all, she had never met anyone like Vaan, nor had anyone made her feel a certain way before him.

Nevertheless, she would rather kill herself than admit that she was attracted to younger men.

Although Astoria seemed calm on the surface, her heart was in turmoil and full of turbulent emotions, thanks to Vaan's proposal-like speech earlier.

She could feel her body's temperature rising from the quickened heartbeat, which would soon turn her face red.

Her excitement, shyness, and embarrassment would be revealed then.

"Since you have firmly decided, I won't continue dissuading you from your choice," Astoria solemnly said before turning away. "It's getting late, Teacher Raphna. I will retire to my sleeping quarters to rest for the night."



"Alright, Headmaster Astoria," Vaan nodded and wished her goodnight, "Rest well. I will see you tomorrow."

"Mm," Astoria acknowledged.

In the next moment, she quickly hurried off and left before she exposed her turbulent emotions and pounding heart.

Little did she know, Vaan had already sensed her fast heartbeat with his sharp hearing and understood everything.

'Looks like my words had some effect on her after all,' Vaan mused thoughtfully.

Everything he said to her had been the truth. He truly wished to explore the vast world and learn everything there is to learn.

Perhaps he was a slave to his own ability, but he had a strong desire for knowledge.

Or perhaps, working in a black company in his previous life until he died a dog's death had awakened his desire to live a life that could experience everything the world had to offer.

Either way, the original reason wasn't important. What's important was what he wanted; it was his choice, his will.

Shortly after Astoria left, Vaan shifted his attention to Hester, who appeared to be on the other side of the mountain peak.

Although the mana concentration in her location couldn't compare to Eniwse's room during their dual-practice session, there was no doubt that mana was concentrating around Hester.

It didn't take long for Vaan to understand that Hester was attempting to form her third magic circle and ascend to the High Witch rank.

'Although Hester has long reached the peak of Senior Witch, and her first two magic circles have achieved full saturation, it doesn't guarantee that she will succeed in her advancement,' Vaan silently thought.

After all, forming the third magic circle around the heart was a major bottleneck that prevented a majority of witches from progressing further.

Hester still faced a chance of failure if she was ill-prepared.

'It seems Hester has some dragons watching over her advancement attempt. With them around, I doubt my presence is still necessary. Even so, I should still join them,' Vaan decided.

He had never seen a Senior Witch ascend to the High Witch rank in person before; Hester's advancement would provide valuable information and could be used for future references.

A few moments later, Vaan headed over to Hester's location and joined the small crowd of dragons spectating in the area.

...

Meanwhile, Astoria returned to the guest building and headed straight into a spare room, locking the door right after before burying her face in the bed and listening to her racing heart.

She didn't pay attention to anyone else in the guest building on her way in.

...

At that moment, Eniwse had an uninvited guest in her room.

Given the concentration of mana that had gathered around the guest building in the past several hours, it wasn't hard for Aeliana to guess what had been going on.

Thus, right after Vaan left the area, she immediately went in to confront Eniwse.

"What brings you into my room, Lady Aeliana?" Eniwse casually asked as she sat up with her naked body wrapped in a blanket, still filled with Vaan's scent and their love-making.

Although she was still exhausted from her dual practice with Vaan, she was recovering quickly.

"I just want to remind you that although you've known Lord Vaan longer, I was the first Abomination he treated, and my power is stronger than yours. Thus, I am like your senior," Aeliana stated before saying, "As we are both his people, I hope you can be considerate and not monopolize his affections."

"Is that all you wanted to ask?" Eniwse asked, shaking her head with an amused smile before saying, "As you said, we are both his people. So if you want his affection, you can have it. I won't fight with you for it. That's not important to me."

"What's important is what I can do to help Vaan. It just so happens that I've figured out what it is that I can do to be useful to him," Eniwse stated with a confident smile.

Aeliana suddenly felt awkward and inferior after listening to Eniwse.

While she was trying to pick a fight over Vaan's affection, the person didn't care about competing with her at all.

"I see..." Aeliana uttered wryly before asking, "And what would that be?"

"Setting up an intelligence network," Eniwse stated with a sharp look.