

The Witch 361

Chapter 361: Departing Gifts

The discomfort didn't come from recording too many fire-attribute magical plants. Even if there was a limit to the Plant Compendium, he was sure he was still far from it.

There wasn't anything wrong with his body either.

The sudden discomfort came from his sixth sense, telling him something bad had happened or was going to happen in the near future to him or the people around him.

Vaan's Demigod-rank soul enabled him to perceive the laws, or rather, the 'beliefs' in the world. People's trust and belief in him was also a type of belief.

'Is this how divine-level beings sense the thoughts of their believers?' Vaan wondered.

He quickly comprehended that the cumulative belief of people in a divine-level being was also a form of power that could strengthen the said divine-level being.

The seven Great Devils relied on the connection formed through the power of belief with their worshippers.

'So this is how the Great Devils make contracts with humans and pass their divine power over without personally descending into this world,' Vaan understood.

He wouldn't be surprised if the followers of the seven Great Devils were their eyes and ears in the literal sense.

Considering Vaan only had a Demigod-rank soul, he was still far from performing such divine abilities.

But at the very least, he understood the discomfort was a sign of someone thinking about him and possibly needing his help.

Vaan immediately started to filter through his list of contacts.

The twin flowers of the Delarosa Household should have made it to the capital long ago. If they encountered a problem, they wouldn't suddenly think of him now.

Thus, it was unlikely them.

It couldn't be the students from Redpine Academy either. His time there was short, and his relationships were casual, not enough interactions to develop strong bonds and worship.

Thus, Redpine Academy was also ruled out.

It was even less likely to be Hester, Astoria, Eniwse, and Aeliana, as they were all in the Red Dragon Clan under the protection of the dragons. If there were problems, the dragons would resolve them.

Thus, it couldn't be them either.

'As expected, I've been away for too long. Dahlia and the others must have encountered a problem in Sunpeak Town,' Vaan determined.

Although it seemed like it took some time before Vaan arrived at a conclusion, his whole thought process had happened in an instant.

'I need to return quickly and check on the situation,' Vaan decided.

He immediately left the Trial by Fire and arrived at Dragon Summit.

At the same time, the nine dragon lords sensed Vaan's spiritual summoning. As such, they immediately dropped their activities to answer his call.

Within a few breaths of Vaan landing on Dragon Summit, the nine dragon lords all arrived at once.

"What do you need from us, Supreme Leader? Please command us," Astarot enquired, prepared to start a war if Vaan willed it so.

"I need to make a quick trip to a human settlement in the Kingdom of Black Rose. But, once I leave, I'm unlikely to return for a while as well," Vaan mentioned. "I need someone who can send me to my destination with spatial magic in the shortest time possible."

The nine dragon lords all glanced at each other.

They knew the supreme leader was preparing to return to the witch kingdom, but they didn't expect it to be so soon.

Nevertheless, they had to follow his wish.

"If it's within the Kingdom of Black Rose, any one of us can send you there with a single spell, Supreme Leader," Astarot informed before quickly adding, "But before you go, there is something we would all like to give you."

"Something you would like to give me?" Vaan was slightly surprised before he acknowledged with a nod, "Alright, but make it quick."

"Yes, Supreme Leader!" Astarot and the other dragon lords answered.

Shortly after, the dragon lords flew back to their caves and picked up the items they had prepared in the past three days before returning to Dragon Summit.

"This is what each of us wanted to gift you, Supreme Leader," Astarot and the other dragon lords presented their gifts all at once, including Narvim and Khaleesi's.

In total, Vaan received six sets of clothes, one set of armor, a heavy broadsword, and a huge black metal cube, which appeared to be a type of magic tool.

Thinking Vaan would have difficulty carrying everything, they added an adjustable belt, an interspatial storage magic tool, which possessed a warehouse-size subspace.

The six sets of clothes were all made of dragon fabric. They came in sets of pure black, pure dark red, or a mix of both and some gold lining.

Although they only possess Rank 3 defense, their fire resistance was comparable to peak Rank 5.

The armor set was made of dragon scales and other rare metals added into the mix. Its color was also comprised of black and dark red. As for its defense, it was comparable to High-Rank 5.

The heavy broadsword's quality was also at High-Rank 5, made of dragon scales and other rare metals. Its main body and hilt were jet black, while its blade was bright red.

Every piece of equipment was refined and stunning, like a work of art. Their extraordinary craftsmanship wasn't something one would expect to be made by dragons.

However, anything was possible when they had perfect control of their magic.

Finally, the huge black metal cube was a spatial-type magic tool capable of opening a huge spatial portal connecting to a giant gateway on First Peak.

Although the black metal cube could also be used as a Rank 5 defensive item, its primary purpose was to connect to the Red Dragon Clan.

As the dragon lords introduced each item, Vaan didn't hesitate to swap out his current clothes for one of the new sets made from dragon fabric.

Always burning his clothes was an inconvenience that the dragon lords had taken into consideration during their creation.

"Amazing. These items would all be considered priceless treasures in the Kingdom of Black Rose. I will definitely put them to good use," Vaan promised.

The dragon fabric clothes were a perfect fit and gave him a refreshing new look.

"We would be honored if they serve you well, Supreme Leader!" Astarot and the other dragon lords responded.

"Alright." Vaan nodded with satisfaction before commanding them, "If you would do the honors, Lord Astarot. Please send me to Sunpeak Town."

"Gladly, Supreme Leader!" Astarot answered happily.

Chapter 362: Infamous Enigma

Back in Sunpeak Town, a deathly calmness filled the streets during the busy day. All the townsfolk started their day as if everything was normal.

However, everyone knew this was only the calm before the great storm enveloped Sunpeak Town. Something big would soon happen.

Earlier in the day, an announcement was posted on the town's bulletin board.

It mentioned an assassination attempt on the acting lord's life had occurred during the night, resulting in the death of one assistant.

The acting lord demanded the town work together to find out the culprit behind the assassination attempt and bring them forward for punishment.

If no one were brought forward within twenty-four hours, the acting lord would summon reinforcements from the capital to deliver justice and order in Sunpeak Town.

After receiving such an announcement, it was impossible for the various forces gathered in Sunpeak Town to remain still.

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On the top floor of a newly renovated three-story building located on the outer edges of Sunpeak Town, a group of merchants was prostrated on the ground in fear.

In front of them sat a beautiful lady with long hair white like snow, blue eyes sharp like hawks, pointy ears like elves, and a curvaceous fair body hidden under a loose-fitted blue-white dress and grey fur cloak.

Much of the lady's beauty waned from her deadpan expression and an icy gaze so cold it could chill the hearts of Peak-stage Senior Witches.

Evidently, this beautiful lady possessed superior power and authority compared to the merchants before her.

She was the Lord of Wolfwater City, Silvaria Winter, an Early-stage High Witch like High Witch Beth, who had also visited Sunpeak Town.

"So, you're all telling me none of you were involved in last night's assassination attempt on the acting lord of Sunpeak Town?" Silvaria interrogated the group of merchants.

"Y-Yes, that's correct, Lord Silvaria!" the merchants all answered quickly as if their life depended on it. "I-I don't think it was any of the other merchants from our kingdom either."

They might have some status in the kingdom as Peak-stage Senior Witches. However, none of them held any real authority or were given rights to manage Her Majesty's land.

They wouldn't dare attempt an assassination on the acting lord's life and risk the wrath of Her Majesty.

Furthermore, Lady Solana wasn't an easy opponent individually, either. So they wouldn't be able to do a clean job unless they band together and concoct a fool-proof plan.

"Are you saying merchants from other witch kingdoms or some other forces were behind it? Or are you suggesting that Lady Solana made up the whole incident to avoid accepting my invitation?" Silvaria pressed her questions.

"I... I... Um, I... think... Yes—" the merchants stuttered, failing to form complete sentences. The pressure of a High Witch was no joke.

"I-I think, what? Speak coherently! I don't have all day!" Silvaria interrupted snappishly, having lost her patience. "So stop wasting my time."

"Y-Yes, Lord Silvaria...!" the group of merchants answered out of fear before one of them continued, "I think Lady Solana might have made up the whole assassination incident."

"Elaborate," Silvaria demanded with a frown.

She had her own thoughts on the matter, but she also wanted to hear the perspectives of others.

"While Sunpeak Town isn't an important city, it's still located in the centremost region of the kingdom. It's unlikely for outsiders to infiltrate so far into our kingdom to cause trouble," one of the merchants believed before stating, "Thus, Lady Solana making up the assassination incident is the more likely conclusion."

"If that were true, Lady Solana would be a ruthless and dangerous person for killing her own people to make the incident seem more legitimate, not to mention the use of poison," Silvaria mentioned with a frown.

"Regardless of the case, there's no way all the greedy and more ruthless opportunists gathered in Sunpeak Town will sit still after Lady Solana made such a claim."

Silvaria suspected there would be an attack on the lord's estate tonight.

After all, it was easier to silence Lady Solana before she could use the communication magic tool than to track down the culprits behind the assassination attempt, whom they don't even know if it was true or not.

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Meanwhile, a group of people gathered in the dense forest a few miles off the east side of Sunpeak Town.

Most of their features were hidden under their black cloaks, and even their face and limbs were all covered up in black cloths, not exposing a single piece of their flesh.

However, judging by their weapons, equipment, and intense aura, they were all individually strong warriors.

At that moment, more than sixty people in such hidden attires had gathered to share information and discuss their plans.

"I've brought the latest news from Sunpeak Town. The acting lord made the assassination attempt public to the whole town, and a search for the culprits was issued. The acting lord will contact the capital with a communication magic tool if the culprits aren't captured within twenty-four hours."

"Contact the capital?" The whole group showed visible confusion in their eyes after hearing the news. They wondered, "With what communication magic tool? Didn't we already take it? The acting lord has another one?"

"The chances of that are unlikely. Only a single communication magic tool is issued to each regional lord. Therefore, the acting lord must be bluffing to manipulate the situation in the town."

"That might be the case. However, we can't risk our entire operation on that tiny possibility of the acting lord possessing another communication magic tool. It will be difficult to exact our revenge if this region attracts the capital's attention."

"Then, what do you propose we do, Infamous Enigma?"

"The second group will arrive in this region tonight. If we joined forces, we would have a higher chance of silencing the acting lord cleanly."

"Kekeke, great. My sword has been rusting from the lack of action these days."

"Be serious. We can't afford a single mistake and expose our traces. Once others become aware of our presence, it will become more difficult to sow chaos in this kingdom."

"Alright, alright. You're the leader, Infamous Enigma."

The group consulted.

Chapter 363: Silvaria's Visit

In Sunpeak Town, the day went by relatively peacefully, much to many townspeople's surprise.

Besides the merchants negotiating prices aggressively with the locals, there weren't any noteworthy incidents during the daytime.

However, the more calm the day was, the more fearsome the townspeople believed the night would be. At the very least, they weren't expecting it to be a quiet night.

Anyone could sense the subtle tension and eeriness in the air.

At the start of sunset, the townspeople started ending their activities and packing up their stores ahead of their usual closing hours just so they could return home a little earlier.

But while the adults were busy with their preparations, conscious of the town's situation, the children continued to play tag on the streets without a care in the world, oblivious to everything.

A stall owner was loading a crate of fruits from his roadside stall onto a wagon when a little boy ran past and bumped into him, causing a couple of apples to fall out and roll on the ground.

Although the little boy fell to the ground, he quickly picked himself up and continued his game of tag with his friends.

However, the stall owner wasn't having any of it.

"Ayo, come back here, you little shit!" the stall owner cursed, putting down the fruit crate to fetch the fallen apples.

His loud voice easily scared the little boy into obeying the stall owner, turning back despite trembling with fear. The little boy knew he was in trouble.

However, contrary to the little boy's imagination, the stall owner did not punish or lecture him for bumping into him.

"Where are your parents, brat? Stop playing and go home, alright? Stay off the streets. It's not safe at night. Here, take this with you." The stall owner dusted the two fallen apples before giving them to the little boy. "Alright, off you go."

Remember to tell your friends too."

The little boy obediently nodded with surprise before running off with the apples. Afterward, the stall owner returned to pack up his stall like everyone else.

Nevertheless, some other male stall owners witnessed the incident and couldn't help but give the man a thumbs up.

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In the central town area, the day got darker by the moment as Silvaria casually strolled down the streets without any company.

She patrolled the vicinity of the lord's estate and observed its security. Seeing the weak security, she could only shake her head.

During the day, a large group of loyal townspeople had gathered in front of the lord's estate, hoping to apply for guard duty and protect the acting lord during the night.

However, Solana turned most of them away, only keeping a few capable Senior Witches and Aura Masters.

Solana was grateful for her people's loyalty and enthusiasm, but she didn't want them to waste their life.

She expected a tough battle ahead of her since none of the culprits were turned in during the day.

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"We played with fire, and now we are going to get burned," Dahlia softly sighed as she glanced outside from the second floor's balcony.

"We don't know that for certain. Sure, the battle won't be easy with the number of hands we have, but defeat isn't absolute," Solana stated before suggesting, "You haven't fully recovered yet. You should rest some more, Lady Dahlia."

However, Dahlia shook her head.

"You're being too hopeful, Lady Solana," Dahlia stated before saying, "I must remind you that our enemies were willing to use underhanded and forceful means to eliminate us. That means they are not afraid of us."

"Our enemies are likely more powerful than we can imagine. We are only still alive because they have been careful and don't want to expose their identities while carrying out whatever purpose they have in Sunpeak Town."

"However, you have forced their hands by threatening to contact the capital. They will likely come out and strike us swiftly with their full force tonight," Dahlia guessed.

"I have given Sunpeak Town's situation some thought, Lady Dahlia," Solana suddenly mentioned with a calm look.

"The most desperate people desiring to control and profit from Sunpeak Town's rising market would be the first-generation witches who didn't contribute much to the Holy War. They are anxious to gain quick wealth to exchange for resources that can advance their magic or extend their dwindling lifespans."

"However, I am different from them. I was a great contributor in the Holy War and was granted this land by Her Majesty. So even if those first-generation witches are Peak-stage Senior Witches like me, they won't be my opponent," Solana confidently stated.

"That's under the assumption that the culprits behind the assassination attempt are these first-generation witches you speak of, Lady Solana," Dahlia argued. "We can't be certain, given our lack of information."

"However, considering the town's situation is far from normal, I'm more inclined to believe they belong to a different force, one we aren't privy about."

"I can't help but feel like we've been caught in something much larger than we can imagine," Dahlia added before she noticed something outside. "Oh? Someone is coming."

"Who?" Solana asked.

However, Dahlia didn't recognize the person. She could only tell that the person wasn't weak.

Nevertheless, they soon got their answer.

"Silvaria Winter, Lord of Wolfwater City, has come to pay the acting lord of Sunpeak Town," Silvaria announced her visit outside the lord's estate.

"Since you didn't accept my invitation during the day, I assume you didn't want to see me. However, now that I am here, surely you won't refuse to meet me, right?"

"The Lord of Wolfwater City is here in person?" Solana and the others were immediately startled by Silvaria's announcement.

She quickly glanced over the balcony and coincidentally made eye contact with the person before she subconsciously clenched the hilt of her sword in shock.

"High Witch! The Lord of Wolfwater City was a High Witch!" Solana determined at a glance.

"Hold on, Lady Solana." Dahlia placed a hand on Solana and said, "Considering Lord Silvaria visited us openly, I don't think she's the enemy."

"If she truly is a High Witch, there's nothing we can do with her as the enemy anyway. We should hear her out, Lady Solana," Cyrena suggested.

"Alright," Solana nodded, feeling slightly less tensed.

Chapter 364: Dynamic Entry

Shortly after Solana went to the entrance to receive Lord Silvaria, she ordered her tense people to lower their weapons and relax. The Lord of Wolfwater was her guest.

They stood no chance against a High Witch either way.

It was imperative that Solana learn the purpose of Silvaria's visit, seeing she did not come with ill intentions.

"Excuse me for not welcoming you with a proper reception, Lord Silvaria," Solana politely apologized. "Our situation hasn't been exactly great these days. Anyway, I assume your purpose here is to negotiate the central property prices?"

"Negotiate the central property prices?" Silvaria shook her head with a cynical smile before she replied, "You look down on me too much, Lady Solana."

"Who am I? I am the Lord of Wolfwater City. The situation in Wolfwater City isn't so bad that I would come to Sunpeak Town just to act cheap. It's true that I am a little bit interested in purchasing a property or two, and I don't mind buying at the current market value."

"However, the reason I am here is something else entirely. I think you should be able to figure it out by now," Silvaria stated.

"You came to confirm my daughter's recovery?" Solana asked, quickly realizing Silvaria's purpose.

"Precisely," Silvaria calmly acknowledged before she mentioned, "You should understand that all witches fear berserk transformations. Thus, Lord Aeliana recovering from her abomination state is no small matter."

"I heard many scholars had paid a visit to Sunpeak Town to confirm the validity of this rumor in the past month, only to leave with disappointment due to Aeliana's absence. As a result, most scholars already concluded the rumor to be false."

"However, I think differently. I doubt someone like you would use your daughter as a gimmick to raise Sunpeak Town's value if she were dead. Thus, there must be some truth to the rumor."

"Why don't you share the details with me and tell me where Lord Aeliana is now? I am interested in listening to the story," Silvaria stated.

"Alright," Solana agreed with a thoughtful look.

Afterward, Solana chatted with Silvaria in the drawing room for several hours. She only mentioned vague details regarding her daughter's recovery before informing Silvaria about the Thousand Fog Mountains.

She also brought idle topics to draw out the time and keep Silvaria entertained.

"I know what you are trying to do, Lady Solana. But if you wish to borrow my power to overcome your current crisis, you should have requested me formally. Not use some roundabout tactic," Silvaria suddenly said, standing up. "It's getting late. I should go."

She was disappointed to learn there was no further news of Lord Aeliana after she headed to the Thousand Fog Mountains.

The person was unlikely to be alive after staying inside the Thousand Fog Mountains for so long.

Meanwhile, Solana regretted she couldn't make Silvaria stay for longer.

Nevertheless, just as Silvaria stood up to leave, she suddenly picked up a subtle yet strange sound outside the lord's estate with her sharp hearing. Soon, she frowned, feeling it was too quiet.

She immediately asked Solana to call out to the guards stationed outside. But when Solana did as she requested, no one outside replied.

"It seems your enemies are anxious to get rid of you," Silvaria commented with a sigh. "There's still a couple of hours until midnight, but they have already made their move."

Even if she wanted to leave at that moment, she couldn't. She was caught in their mess.

Solana's expression changed before she hurriedly summoned everyone in the estate to gather together.

"Keep close! The enemy wants to take us out silently. But, if we stick together in this formation, they can only confront us head-on!" Solana informed everyone.

In that instant, everyone was in the most spacious room on the ground floor. They stood close with their backs to each other to cover all their blind spots.

"I know you didn't want to be here, but I hope you can at least protect Cyrena and Lady Dahlia, Lord Silvaria," Solana sincerely requested.

Silvaria glanced at Cyrena and Dahlia in the center of the formation. Because they were the most vulnerable, they were kept in the center for protection.

"I can do at least that much," Silvaria nodded.

A few moments later, the front entrance and numerous glass windows shattered at once as dark figures shot inside.

"Here they come!" Solana alerted, readying her sword to slaughter as many foes as soon as possible to minimize their casualties.

However, the harsh blade of reality quickly crushed Solana's hopeful expectations during the first clash.

The enemy was far more powerful than everyone could have imagined.

The enemy's single blows shattered the Senior Witches' defensive spells, and the Aura Masters at the forefront were all mercilessly cut down instantly.

Even Solana felt like a giant sledgehammer struck her when she attempted to block some attacks with her sword. The crushing blows made her hands numb and shook her body.

"Shit!" Silvaria cursed her luck.

She expected Solana's side to be at a disadvantage. But even she did not expect the outcome to be so one-sided. She immediately realized she had to fight with everything she had if she even wished for the tiny possibility of making it out alive.

Silvaria didn't hesitate to conjure her most powerful defense spell.

A large volume of water quickly burst into being, momentarily pushing back all the attackers. Then, the body of water formed a dome around the survivors, revolving at high speed and becoming a water barrier.

"A High Witch! They had a High Witch among them!"

"What?! Quickly take her down fast! We can't waste too much time here!"

The group of black-cloaked men was evidently startled by Silvaria's presence. However, their eyes quickly gleamed with ruthlessness.

Shortly after, they attacked Silvaria's water barrier with increasing ferocity.

"Who the hell are you people?!" Silvaria roared with a hint of fear.

If she relaxed her water barrier for even a moment, it would result in the complete annihilation of their group.

At the same time, she was also aware that it was impossible to escape alone, even if she abandoned Solana and the others. Enemies of similar caliber surrounded the entire estate.

Nevertheless, the group of black-cloaked men did not bother answering Silvaria's question as they pressed their attacks.

"Dammit! Think of something, Lady Solana! I can't keep this up forever!" Silvaria cried desperately, too focused on maintaining the water barrier to be distracted by other thoughts.

However, Lady Solana remained unresponsive. Instead, she stood still with a blank and lost look.

The enemy was too strong.

Dahlia knew they were only still alive because of Silvaria. Thus, she channeled all her mana into Silvaria to support the water barrier.

Silvaria was surprised by Dahlia's action, but she quickly acknowledged her assistance.

"Dammit, Lady Solana! If you're not going to do anything, then at least reinforce me with your mana!" Silvaria urged. "You might have given up on living, but I haven't!"

Solana finally recovered from her daze before she supplied all her mana to Silvaria.

Cyrena stood on the side with a helpless look of despair. She didn't have a single ounce of power to contribute to their survival effort.

All she could do was blindly pray, hoping her teacher would return with Headmaster Astoria and Lord Aeliana to save them.

"Cease your struggles and just accept death. Why must you force yourself to suffer for a few more minutes when it can all end in an instant?" Infamous Enigma persuaded Silvaria and the other to give up, having lost his patience. "Even if you survive a little longer, nothing but death awaits you, High Witch."

"Piss off!" Silvaria cursed venomously, stubbornly resisting. She wouldn't give up until the very end.

Her persistence infected Dahlia and Solana.

"Hmph! Then keep struggling! No one can save you!" Infamous Enigma snorted coldly.

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While the lord's estate was under attack by a couple of dozen men in black cloaks, there were still more than a hundred men stationed on the roofs of the nearby buildings.

They had the lord's estate and the entire central town under watch. Still, no one noticed a spatial portal silently opening in the dark airspace above them.

They were only alerted when Vaan fell out and softly landed on the rooftop beside them.

"Huh? Who the hell are you? Where did you come from?!" the men in black cloaks were alarmed by his sudden presence.

They didn't expect anyone to appear so close to them without them noticing. It was like the person appeared out of thin air.

Nevertheless, Vaan only responded to them with a slight frown before his Omni-Sense covered the whole town.

After he sensed the situation inside the lord's estate, his eyes turned sharp with a cold glint.

"Why are you questioning him instead of killing him—!"

Boom!

Just when the men in black cloaks drew their weapons, flames exploded from the soles of Vaan's feet, causing his figure to disappear as they thrust his body toward the lord's estate at a breakneck speed.

He went sonic.

At the same time, the nearby men in black cloaks caught in the trail of flames were reduced to black ashes and dispersed into the wind.

Vaan directly smashed through the wall and slammed the heads of two men in black cloaks into the ground with his hands, crushing them into pulps and stunning everyone else in the lord's estate.

As for the two men with their heads crushed like popped watermelons, they naturally died instantly.

It took some time for everyone to register what had just happened. However, Cyrena's eyes quickly sparkled with hope and joy.

"Teacher!"

Chapter 365: Vaan's Declaration

Although Infamous Enigma and his men were shocked by Vaan's lightning-swift appearance, they did not completely lose their sense of reasoning.

Considering how quickly two of their men were taken down, they knew Vaan posed a great threat.

"Kill him!" Infamous Enigma hastily issued the order, having no time to assess Vaan's strength properly.

The four closest members of the black cloaks immediately lunged at Vaan with their rank-four weapons, piercing at him with their full force.

However, their attacks were all blocked by an incredibly hot wall of blue flames. Within a split second, their weapons became too hot to hold.

But before the four black-cloaked men could retract their hands, Vaan's blue fire wall expanded and enveloped them.

The four men did not even get the chance to utter a cry of pain before the fire wall reduced them all to black ashes. The incineration process occurred so quickly it looked like their bodies disintegrated due to rot or decay magic.

Infamous Enigma's pupil instantly shrank.

"Be careful! He also has a higher-stage High Witch backing him up!" Infamous Enigma quickly warned his men.

However, none of the black cloaks could sense the higher-stage High Witch's location. In fact, they couldn't even tell how the higher-stage High Witch was attacking them.

They did not sense the slightest movement of mana in the atmosphere. It was almost as if the flames burst into being without being fueled by any source of power.

Meanwhile, half of the black cloaks outside came rushing over, pouring through the large opening in the lord's estate created by Vaan.

"What's the situation?" the leader of the second black-cloaked group asked.

"Be careful! This person is dangerous!" Infamous Enigma warned before adding, "There's also a higher-stage High Witch specialized in fire magic hidden nearby!"

"A higher-stage High Witch specialized in fire magic?" the leader of the second black-cloaked group was immediately taken aback before his gaze turned grave. Then, he reprimanded the other half of his men outside, "What are you all waiting for?! Search for the High Witch!"

"Yes!"

While the black cloaks inside the lord's estate were apprehensive towards Vaan, he did not continue to attack them. Instead, he frowned before he walked through Silvaria's water barrier.

"Ahhhh—!"

An explosion of hot steam immediately filled the area, causing disorder and chaos among the black cloaks' ranks as they scattered in pain and agony from the scalding.

After Vaan entered the water barrier, the hole he created was quickly patched up as the water barrier continued to revolve at high speed.

However, the caster, Silvaria's mind was hazy from prolonged exhaustion in maintaining the water barrier.

"Who are... you?" Silvaria uttered feebly, sensing the pressure of an Aura King coming from Vaan as he approached her.

The Kingdom of Black Rose had no Aura King. Not a single one of the seven witch kingdoms had any. Aura Kings were existences that could only be found in the kingdoms and empires beyond the seven witch kingdoms' borders.

Nevertheless, Vaan didn't answer Silvaria's question. Instead, he focused his attention on Solana and Dahlia, especially the latter.

The two had been lying on the ground for some time, depleted of mana and energy. Only Cyrena was fine and fully conscious.

"Teacher, it's great that you are finally back! So much has happened in Sunpeak Town," Cyrena mentioned emotionally as her eyes welled up with tears.

They had suffered so much, yet they were forced to endure it all on their own. Seeing someone familiar and dependable finally appear, Cyrena wanted to cry her eyes out.

"Vahn...?" Dahlia glanced up and saw Vaan's familiar face before she revealed a weak, joyful smile, relieved that he was alive. "You're finally back."

"You've all suffered," Vaan uttered with a soft sigh, picking Dahlia up in his arms. He then slit a cut on his thumb with his index nail and fed his potent blood to her.

In that instant, energy and life immediately returned to Dahlia, expelling weakness from her body. She felt all her wounds heal rapidly. Even her low blood level was seemingly replenished quickly.

She couldn't help but feel shocked by the incredible healing potency of Vaan's blood.

Nevertheless, after Dahlia was healed, Vaan let her stand on her own before he walked up and patted Silvaria on the shoulder.

"Thank you for protecting my people. I will take care of the rest. So, you can release the water spell now," Vaan calmly stated.

At that moment, there weren't any black-cloaked men standing near the water barrier. They had all been forced outside the lord's estate by the eruption of scalding-hot steam.

Silvaria nodded and released her water spell.

Shortly after, Vaan stepped out.

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Outside the lord's estate, the black cloaks all hid in the shadows of the nearby buildings while the two group leaders contemplated their next course of action.

"The higher-stage High Witch is tricky to deal with since we don't know her location, but the young man shouldn't be a problem. He should be at the peak of the Aura Lord rank at most. The Kingdom of Black Rose doesn't have any Aura King. As such, we can take him on. What do you think, Lethal Shade?" Infamous Enigma enquired.

"Fortunately, the higher-stage High Witch's flames were blue. If they were black flames, I would have suspected the Black Rose Transcendent Witch had come in person," Lethal Shade mentioned.

"Still, those blue flames are too powerful and bizarre. Even if we succeed in this operation, our losses would be too great. We've already lost three A-rank Witch Hunters on my side. I suggest we retreat to minimize our losses, Infamous Enigma."

"And I lost five A-rank Witch Hunters on my side," Infamous Enigma added before concurring, "I agree with you, Lethal Shade. The loss is not worth continuing this operation."

"Fortunately, those blue flames eliminated all traces of the A-rankers. Otherwise, we won't be able to leave until we fetch their bodies."

"Right. Let us leave—"

Just when Infamous Enigma and Lethal Shade were about to issue the retreat order, they heard Vaan's following words and halted.

"Leaving so soon? That's fine. You can run, but you can't hide. I've already memorized the faces of every one of you bastards from the Assembly of Silent Night. Your covers are nothing in front of my eyes. I will track you and hunt you down one by one if you leave."

Although the black cloaks didn't believe Vaan had memorized all their faces, which were hidden under black cloths, they could no longer leave.

Their origins have been exposed.

"Fuck. He knows who we are," Infamous Enigma cursed before stating, "We have to kill him and everyone who heard him. Otherwise, it will be a disaster for the organization."

"Right." Lethal Shade nodded, then added, "However, we must be careful of that higher-stage High Witch with blue flames."

Vaan waited outside the lord's estate for some time but didn't receive any response. Thus, he believed they were still wary of him.

"You don't have to worry about the blue flames. It'll be more satisfying to crush you all with my bare hands," Vaan declared.

After the black cloaks heard him, they no longer hesitated.

"Kill him!"

Chapter 366: Broken Spirits

"On me!" Infamous Enigma shouted, leading the attack.

The other members would hesitate to follow up without someone of his caliber to lead the attack. It was something he had to do.

After Infamous Enigma dashed ahead, the other black cloaks also charged at Vaan from different directions. Since they decided to attack, they didn't have fear, not with Infamous Enigma taking the lead.

Furthermore, they all possessed strength comparable to Rank 4 Aura Lords.

"Die!" Infamous Enigma roared.

Even as the enemies closed in on Vaan, he remained unarmed and welcomed them with his bare hands fearlessly.

The enemies might be using Rank 3 – Rank 4 weapons, but he had nothing to fear. After all, his aura cultivation had advanced by leaps and bounds.

=====

«Cultivation»

Aura Circulation Method: The Way of the Formless Dragon (High-rank)

Cultivation Level: Early Rank 3 Aura Grandmaster → Peak Rank 4 Aura Lord

Aura Power: 250 → 1050

Special Trait: Dragon Aura

=====

«Physical Attributes»

[750 → 800 Defense (↑50)] [Mid-level Rank 4] [250 → 1050 Aura Power (↑800)] [Total Defense: 1000 → 1850 (↑850) (High-level Rank 4 → Mid-level Rank 5)]

[1100 Strength] [Peak-level Rank 4] [250 → 1050 Aura Power (↑800)] [Total Strength: 1350 → 2150 (↑800) (Low-level Rank 5 → Mid-level Rank 5)]

[250 → 450 Speed (↑200)] [Low-level Rank 3] [250 → 1050 Aura Power (↑800)] [Total Speed: 500 → 1500 (↑1000) (Peak-level Rank 3 → Low-level Rank 5)]

=====

"Come!" Vaan shouted, excited to test his strength.

In that instant, his dragon aura immediately poured out of his body, surging upwards like boiling water, causing the air and ground to reverberate.

Infamous Enigma's heart shook at the sight of Vaan's thick red aura, but he quickly steeled his heart and pressed his attack.

Clang!

Vaan caught Infamous Enigma's blade with his bare hand before he kicked Infamous Enigma in the stomach, sending him flying.

Infamous Enigma immediately lost control of his weapon, but he did not care about that; shock was written all over his face as he flew through the air and crashed into a building.

In the brief instance in which his weapon made contact with his opponent's incredibly thick red aura, he felt his attack's momentum slow down drastically.

'Such a tyrannical aura!' Infamous Enigma thought.

He wondered if his attack would even be able to cut the person by the time the blade made contact with the person's skin.

After Vaan blocked the first attack and sent the person flying, it was immediately followed up by the attacks of five other black cloaks.

However, Vaan deflected all their weapons with the blade in his hand in one swift and circular motion. Then, he followed up with a whipping kick, breaking the ribs and spine of the first victim, bending the person into a V-curve.

In the same instance, the person slammed into three out of the other four black cloaks as they were also caught in Vaan's whipping kick and had numerous bones in their bodies shattered.

The last black cloak was fortunate enough to dodge with a duck, but Vaan's chop soon came down on his head, crushing his skull, brain, neck, and partway into his chest.

Blood splattered everywhere.

Vaan could have easily split the person in half with more force if not for the person's armor hindering the path of his chop.

Nevertheless, the remaining black cloaks in the surrounding quickly halted their charge, stunned by such brutality.

Vaan's method of fighting was so primitive and beast-like. There wasn't any skill or technique used, just raw physical power.

"This is a Peak-stage Aura Lord? Even Peak-stage Aura Lords aren't this strong! I've seen people of King Varan's caliber possessing such brute strength!" Lethal Shade cursed.

His confidence quickly dropped to rock bottom, but he did not give up.

Witches had the advantage in their spells of mass destruction, while aura users' strength lay in their single-combat prowess. They could be overwhelmed with numbers.

"What are you all waiting for?! Overwhelm him with our numbers! Don't give him a chance to relax! We can overpower him with our numbers!" Lethal Shade barked his orders.

However, the black cloaks remained hesitant. They didn't want to become crushed bloody messes like their fallen comrades.

Meanwhile, Vaan noticed a survivor among the five black cloaks he took down.

The person suffered severe internal injuries due to shattered bones but still mustered all his strength to crawl away, dragging his broken body along the dirt-filled ground.

Bam!

Vaan splattered the person's head with a stomp and put the person out of his misery. Then, he glanced up at the shaken and hesitating black cloaks nearby.

"Not coming? Then, I'll come to you!" Vaan declared, eyes burning with silent rage and excitement. His battle spirits rose while his opponents' were crushed.

He had verified the might of his dragon aura. It was so strong and sturdy that it was comparable to the aura of Rank 5 Aura Kings and no different from actual dragon scales.

As such, he gave up blocking attacks entirely.

With a single step, Vaan launched his body forward toward the closest black cloak within his line of sight.

The person was so scared that he took a clumsy step back.

It wasn't so bad when Vaan didn't single out any of the black cloaks. But when he did target one, the black cloak was absolutely terrified despite being a battle-hardened A-rank Witch Hunter.

The A-ranker felt like a tiny person facing a humongous dragon; small and insignificant in comparison.

Nevertheless, the A-ranker didn't get the chance to recover from his hesitation.

Vaan closed the distance between them instantly and drilled his hand right through the A-ranker's stomach in an uppercut motion, easily reaching up to the chest area and lifting the person's entire body up in the air due to their height difference.

The A-ranker was only six feet tall, while Vaan had already reached six feet four.

After the person had half of Vaan's arm inside his upper body, he could only hang powerlessly in the air before Vaan tossed his body aside.

A heart remained in Vaan's hand before he crushed it.

In that instant, the remaining A-rankers from the Assembly of Silent Night all felt their heart turn cold, and a chill ran up their spines, giving them goosebumps.

In the face of absolute strength, many lost their fighting spirits.

Chapter 367: Futile Resistance

While the majority of the black cloaks were stricken with fear, Vaan's eyes gleamed as he held the crushed heart in his hand.

He only found out the black cloaks belonged to the Assembly of Silent Night due to the faint wolf scent they all carried. Their Fuhengir Bloodline seemed weak in comparison.

However, Vaan quickly realized they were using a special method to conceal their Fuhengir Bloodline, which was superior to the last group.

He could use their blood.

'It's a good thing I decided not to burn them. It would have been a waste of Fuhengir's blood inside them,' Vaan thought.

Shortly after, he began actively hunting down the Assembly of Silent Night's A-rank members, tearing right into the nearest group.

With a series of chops and kicks, Vaan easily demolished a group of twenty Rank 4 fighters in a few breaths, breaking all their limbs and immobilizing them.

"Ahh, noo—! Get away from me!" Some members succumbed to fear and screamed for their lives as they tried to flee from Vaan.

The pressure of Vaan's Demigod-rank dragon soul was mainly to blame for turning these cold-hearted killers into terrified chickens.

Nevertheless, they did not succeed in their escape.

Vaan pounced on them swiftly, pressing them into the ground with his feet and breaking their spines and neck. If they were lucky, they were only immobilized. But if they were unlucky, they died on the spot.

"Kill him! Attack together! Don't give him any moment to relax!" Lethal Shade roared, eyes turning bloodshot from the heavy losses.

Every member was an A-rank Witch Hunter, an elite within the Assembly of Silent Night. And yet, none of them could hold a candle to a single Peak-stage Aura Lord.

That single Peak-stage Aura Lord was powerful beyond belief. It was hard to continue classifying him as a Peak-stage Aura Lord.

He should be considered a Rank 5 Aura King.

"I refuse to believe you are infallible! I've slain Peak-stage Aura Lords before!" Lethal Shade roared, joining the fray.

His heartbeat quickened as he circled to Vaan's rear and lunged forward.

Ba-dump! Ba-dump!

In a short instant, Lethal Shade's body bulged, growing an entire head taller and enlarging his muscles, gaining an explosive strength increase in the last moment.

Even so, Vaan didn't take him seriously. He still used his bare hands to deflect Lethal Shade's sword attack.

However, Lethal Shade abruptly twisted the trajectory of his sword attack, grazing off the thick dragon aura enveloping Vaan's left hand and aiming for his face.

Shing!

Lethal Shade's successfully pulled off his attack, slicing through Vaan's dragon aura and gashing Vaan's left cheek, which caused his head to tilt slightly to the other side.

But although Lethal Shade succeeded in his attack, he was not happy at all. Right after landing his attack, he immediately retreated and created distance between them out of caution.

"Congratulations, you managed to cut me," Vaan casually commented as he swiped the few trickles of drop on his left cheek with his blood.

Lethal Shade's pupil shrank when he saw Vaan's small cut disappear two breaths later due to his high-speed regeneration.

In that very instant, he immediately knew they couldn't win. The person didn't just possess monstrous strength; even his defensive and regenerative abilities were monstrous.

The person could stand there and let them attack all they want, but they still wouldn't be able to kill the person.

They had to deploy a different tactic.

"Everyone, retreat! His power is too great! He can't be killed with our current strength!" Lethal Shade immediately ordered.

His sword was laced with poison, but he could see that it didn't affect Vaan. No, it wasn't that the poison wasn't effective; it just didn't get the chance to show off its effect.

The poison was eliminated before it could penetrate Vaan's body.

"Target the witches inside the lord's estate! We will use them as hostages to make our escape! It's the only way to retreat safely!" Lethal Shade ordered.

Abandoning the big operation was better than complete annihilation. But they couldn't retreat unscathed unless they had insurance.

The A-rank Witch Hunters didn't hesitate to charge toward the lord's estate once they heard the order.

However, a wall of blue flames suddenly appeared in front of them, sealing their path to the lord's estate.

"Wanting to threaten me with my people's safety? How naughty. So naughty that you deserve to be burned," Vaan uttered with narrowed eyes.

He snapped his fingers before the six black cloaks closest to the lord's estate immediately combusted into blue flames.

In the dark of the night, their blackened figures were briefly seen behind the thin veil of bright blue flames. At the same time, the blue flames surging out of their eyes and mouths seemed it was trying to expel their very souls.

"You said we didn't have to worry about the blue flames!" Lethal Shade criticized Vaan despite knowing he didn't have any right to.

Still, Vaan glanced at him calmly and said, "Only if you fight me. It's a different story if you try to run or go after other people besides me."

"Fuck!" Lethal Shade cursed.

Even then, he still didn't know where the higher-stage High Witch was casting her blue flames from. It seemed like the blue flames could simply appear anywhere at will.

But how was that even possible?

Although Lethal Shade couldn't understand how the blue flames worked, he knew they had no chance of escaping. Even so, staying to fight was also certain death.

Resistance was futile. Their opponents were too strong!

Cough* Cough*

Infamous Enigma coughed as he returned to the fight from the broken building nearby, which was coincidentally empty as it was one of Vaan's unsold properties.

"Don't despair just yet, Lethal Shade. Our opponents are indeed too powerful for us, but it's not like we have absolutely zero chance of winning," Infamous Enigma mentioned while coughing.

Despite taking some time to recover, he had yet to recover fully. A single kick had taken nearly half his life.

"You're still alive, Infamous Enigma?" Lethal Shade asked with surprise before his expression quickly turned solemn. "Do you have a plan?"

"I wouldn't exactly call it a plan, but yes," Infamous Enigma admitted with a nod before shouting to the sky, "Please save us, Lord Dream Streak—!"

"..."

The sky was silent for some time before they eventually heard the sound of tongue clicking.

"Tch!"

Chapter 368: Recruitment Offer

Shortly after the brief tongue-click, silence returned to the sky once more.

At the same time, the black cloaks searched the dark sky with their eyes, but they failed to locate the source of the sound.

However, Lethal Shade was completely startled when Infamous Enigma called out Lord Dream Streak.

"Lord Dream Streak is here with us? If we have an S-rank Witch Hunter with us this whole time, why wasn't I privy to this information?" Lethal Shade questioned.

"Such a large number of A-rank Witch Hunters were mobilized to the Kingdom of Black Rose. Did you really think the organization's upper echelons would just let the two of us lead the operation?" Infamous Enigma mentioned.

"The answer is obviously no. It only makes sense that one or two S-rank Witch Hunters would be sent to oversee the operation. And given Lord Dream Streak is usually in charge of matters related to the witch kingdoms, it's only reasonable to assume he is the one sent to watch over us."

"Are you saying Lord Dream Streak has been watching our men get helplessly slaughtered?" Lethal Shade asked, feeling angry at the S-ranker's indifference.

The black cloaks continued to wait for the S-ranker to appear with hopeful looks, but the person never showed up.

During that time, Vaan didn't stay idle.

The black cloaks had the audacity to target his people in his presence. He didn't take kindly to threats and coercion.

He had been powerless for too long. However, now that he was truly powerful, he could finally vent off all the negative feelings he had kept bottled up inside him to his heart's content.

In Vaan's eyes, the black cloaks weren't opponents; they weren't even qualified. They were only dummies and punching bags for him to test the extent of his aura and physical might.

Still, Rank 4 opponents were not strong enough for him; their bodies were too fragile and easily torn apart. Thus, Vaan began targeting their armor instead.

White Tiger Palm!

Boom!

Vaan's palm landed dead center on a black cloak's chest, creating a sizeable palm imprint on the Rank 4 chest plate under the black cloak's clothes and shooting the person off into the distance like a cannonball.

The impact force shattered the person's bones and ruptured his organs. Even so, Vaan didn't let the person off.

Extreme Lightning Fast Step!

Vaan instantaneously closed the distance on the person in the air and grabbed him by the feet before hurling him back towards a group of ten black cloaks on the ground.

Ka-cha!

The person's spine couldn't handle the strain caused by an abrupt and forceful change in two extreme directions and snapped.

If the person hadn't died in the first blow, then he definitely died after slamming into his comrades, crushing them, and shattering many more bones.

Boom!

Vaan shot back into the ground shortly after and finally started killing the remaining black cloaks once and for all. He quickly slaughtered them, reducing their numbers to a mere twenty within a few dozen breaths.

He had conducted enough tests.

"What are you waiting for, Lord Dream Streak?! Will you only be content once we are completely wiped out?! Why won't you help us?!" Lethal Shade and Infamous Enigma were enraged.

Even after losing over a hundred A-rank Witch Hunters, the S-rank Witch Hunter refused to intervene.

It almost seemed like the S-rank Witch Hunter had abandoned them.

In the end, the black cloaks were decimated, leaving Lethal Shade and Infamous Enigma left. The two were forced to fend for themselves but were no match for Vaan.

However, Vaan didn't kill them like the rest of the black cloaks.

Instead, he temporarily spared their lives after crippling their movements and breaking their jaws, robbing them of the ability to even suicide.

Vaan understood the two black cloaks were more important than the rest and may hold valuable information about the Assembly of Silent Night and possibly about various existing powers outside the seven witch kingdoms.

Nevertheless, after defeating all his opponents, Vaan casually collected the salvageable bodies and equipment and piled them all into a small mountain outside the lord's estate, next to the two surviving black cloaks.

Only then did he glance up and fix his gaze on a particular empty spot in the sky.

"Isn't it about time you people showed yourselves?" Vaan nonchalantly asked. Time passed, but he received no response, causing him to become impatient. "No? Then, I will make you."

Shortly after, Vaan made a grasping gesture at the sky.

In that instant, an enormous hand of blue flames manifested, lighting up the night sky as it grabbed an invisible object in the air and dragged it down to the ground.

At the same time, the blue flames burned away the hidden object's invisibility spell and revealed a small magic airship.

After the small magic airship crashed into the ground, two figures escaped the billowing blue flames before finally meeting Vaan face to face.

The two figures did not hide their appearance behind black cloaks and cloth wrappings like the other members of the Assembly of Silent Night.

Instead, they wore impressive Rank 5 black armor and possessed elderly faces. But while they appear quite advanced in their age, their presence was equally intimidating.

They possessed the pressure of Rank 5 beings.

"Haiz," one of the two S-rank Witch Hunters sighed and said to the other, "As expected, this is all your fault, Dream Streak. Your tongue-click exposed us."

"No, I already knew you two were hiding in the sky from the start," Vaan casually corrected, not feeling the slightest pressure from the two.

"Oh?" Dream Streak uttered with interest before saying, "Then, you should also know that we allowed you to kill all our A-rank Witch Hunters."

"No, you knew you didn't stand a chance even if you intervened. That's why you both hid like timid chickens while I slaughtered your men," Vaan retorted with a sharp tongue, not caring about their faces in the slightest.

The two S-rank Witch Hunters' faces twitched, but they suppressed their murderous impulses and forced themselves to remain calm.

"In any case, I hope whatever grievance you have with our organization has been settled with their deaths," Dream Streak stated. "More importantly, we want to welcome a man of your caliber into our ranks as a fellow S-rank Witch Hunter."

"Would you be interested?" the other S-rank Witch Hunter asked.

Chapter 369: Descending Fire Dragon Slash

Once the two S-rank Witch Hunters expressed their intentions to recruit Vaan, Infamous Enigma and Lethal Shade's eyes burned with rage and madness.

Just as they expected, the S-rank Witch Hunters had cold-heartedly left them to die.

"Aaurarghuff—!"

Infamous Enigma and Lethal Shade uttered incoherent noises due to their broken jaws. Still, their anger was apparent.

Dream Streak casually glanced at the two surviving A-rankers.

"It seems you left a few alive," Dream Streak commented before offering, "Let me finish them off for you."

Dream Streak didn't wait for Vaan's answer before he moved forward to end Infamous Enigma and Lethal Shade's lives.

However, Vaan suddenly raised his hand and gave Dream Streak a swift backhanded smack.

Boom!

Although Dream Streak managed to block Vaan's attack, he was still blown away by the immense force packed behind it.

Dream Streak rolled and bounced off the ground while trying to regain his balance, but the force of Vaan's smack proved greater than he had imagined.

He eventually crashed into another one of Vaan's unsold properties in central town before the entire building came crumbling down.

The sight made Vaan pause for a moment before he shook his head. He was planning to redevelop the area anyway.

Meanwhile, the other S-rank Witch Hunter immediately took a defensive stance and stared at Vaan cautiously as the latter remained upright with his back straight.

"You sacrificed over a hundred and twenty A-rank Witch Hunters just to recruit a single S-rank Witch Hunter? Sound like a pretty shitty organization if you ask me," Vaan nonchalantly commented.

"I must admit that your organization is much bigger than I initially expected. But unfortunately, I'm not interested in joining your organization, even if you all did charities and other good deeds. The only thing I'm currently interested in is fighting you two."

"After all, I've never fought a serious battle against Rank 5s before. So, if you two want to live, you better throw everything you got at me," Vaan solemnly said.

"Must we fight?" the S-rank Witch Hunter asked with a soft sigh before he glanced at Vaan's firm eyes and understood his answer. "Very well. I will make you regret challenging us."

"Don't be too proud of your strength. Your power is great, and we are indeed wary of it. However, you are still too green. There is more to one's power than just brute strength. We'll make sure you understand the difference in our skills."

"You heard everything, Dream Streak?" the S-rank Witch Hunter called out to his comrade shortly after.

Boom!

A pile of rubbles burst apart as Dream Streak jumped out and returned to the S-rank Witch Hunter's side.

"Of course, Smiling Knife," Dream Streak answered, drawing his sword and pointing it at Vaan. "We'll teach this arrogant brat a lesson he'll remember in the afterlife. How dare he challenge us with his bare hands? He's underestimating us too—"

"You're right," Vaan suddenly agreed while the person was still talking. Then, he said, "It would indeed be too much to fight against such weapons with my bare hands."

"So, I'll fight you with this," Vaan declared as he took out his Rank 5 Heavy Broadsword.

The two S-rank Witch Hunters weren't just Rank 5 beings. They also possessed Rank 5 equipment and weapons.

He would only sustain unnecessary injuries if he stubbornly fought the two S-rank Witch Hunters with his bare hands.

Nevertheless, when Vaan took out his big black sword, Dream Streak and Smiling Knife's expressions turned solemn and grave.

The pressure of Vaan's presence immediately doubled when he held his weapon, increasing his threat level drastically.

"Hold on a moment. Let us prepare ourselves a—"

"No."

Without waiting for Dream Streak and Smiling Knife's signal, Vaan struck out first with a horizontal slash.

Swish!

"Dammit!" Smiling Knife and Dream Streak cursed.

They narrowly evaded the sudden attack with a duck, followed by splitting up to flank Vaan from two opposing sides.

However, Vaan's continued to swing his heavy broadsword for a second revolution, forcing the two S-rank Witch Hunters to halt their attack. Vaan's weapon had a longer range.

"Don't get caught in his attack! You'll be done for!"

"I know!"

Smiling Knife and Dream Streak both knew they would have a hard time recovering if they tried to take Vaan's attack head-on.

Their only advantage was their speed.

Nevertheless, Vaan also knew he was slower due to the nature of his Rank 5 Heavy Broadsword. Thus, he didn't wait for his opponents' pincer attack.

Before his second spin attack finished, Vaan launched himself high into the air with a big jump.

However, his opponents did not follow him; they weren't stupid. They held the advantage in speed. The moment they followed him into the air, they would immediately lose their advantage.

As such, they waited for Vaan to descend on the ground.

As long as they stayed on the ground, Vaan's air superiority would become a disadvantage, as it would make it hard for him to defend during his descent.

However, that was only true if his opponents could attack him during his moment of landing. A big and unstoppable attack could easily negate his disadvantage.

Vaan twisted his body around, swinging his heavy broadsword upwards as he reached the peak of his flight. Then, he brought it back down during his descent.

Large amounts of blue flames erupted behind him and coated his heavy broadsword, turning it into a flaming heavy broadsword.

The very air rumbled from the power gathering and charging within the heavy broadsword.

In that instant, the eagerly awaiting Smiling Knife and Dream Streak on the ground both had their anticipating expressions frozen stiff.

They quickly understood that staying under Vaan's attack would have catastrophic results.

As such, Smiling Knife and Dream Streak immediately acted on their instinct, fleeing from their present location, which was directly below Vaan.

Descending Fire Dragon Slash!

Vaan descended with great momentum and speed before he unleashed his newly-generated attack skill on the spot the two S-rank Witch Hunters had fled from.

Boom!

The ground did not stand the slightest chance. It gave way, rupturing with web-like cracks as blue flames rushed into them, filling every gap and lighting up the surface area with rapidly increasing brightness.

The next moment, the area covered with cracks erupted, turning into a pillar of raging blue flames.

Smiling Knife and Dream Streak stared at the rising blue light with lingering dread some distance away and broke into cold sweats.

Chapter 370: Plea for Life

Smiling Knife and Dream Streak did not doubt they would have been obliterated if they had been caught in the blast.

The power of the blue flames was so frightening they felt it was even more fearsome than the Black Rose Transcendent Witch's black flames.

After all, even though they had never personally encountered the Black Rose Transcendent Witch's black flames, her flames would still fall within the realms and logic of Rank 5 beings.

Summoning the black flames would stir both the mana within the Black Rose Transcendent Witch and her surrounding.

On the other hand, the blue flames appear without any sign or mana movement, like it was spurred into being when needed.

The most important detail they discovered while observing their opponent was that the blue flames always appeared in sync with the person's will.

Smiling Knife and Dream Streak had also thought that a higher-stage High Witch had been assisting the person, possibly even a Transcendent Witch.

However, it was unlikely for such a person to escape their detection while assisting their opponent, not to mention the power of the blue flames most definitely surpassed the Transcendent Rank.

'A power that transcended the Transcendent...' Smiling Knife and Dream Streak's expressions turned terribly grave.

They had been wrong about their opponent's strength from the start! The person wasn't relying on the assistance of any witch; the blue flames were his own power!

And the blue flames didn't consume any mana because it wasn't magic power but divine power!

They were challenging a god!

...

While various thoughts raced through the two S-rank Witch Hunters' heads, Vaan glanced at the destruction he had created with Descending Fire Dragon Slash.

The devastation wasn't actually widespread; the destroyed ground only reached a five-meter radius around him.

However, the pit was very steep, nearing a hundred meters deep.

Still, that was only the result of striking the ground with only the tip of the heavy greatsword. The power of his slash was concentrated into a powerful drilling force.

If he had used the whole blade, the hole wouldn't have been as deep, but the lord's estate and several surrounding buildings would have been swallowed in the fiery destruction.

'Hm?' Vaan narrowed his eyes with a frown.

After Smiling Knife and Dream Streak witnessed his strength, they actually turned around to flee from him!

Vaan was immediately disappointed that his fight was cut short. He had revealed too much power and scared off his opponents.

"Did I say you could leave?!" Vaan bellowed.

Numerous blue flaming spears were summoned before Vaan fired them at the two fleeing S-rank Witch Hunters, targeting their arms and legs.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The flaming blue spears shot through the air like ballistic missiles and reached Smiling Knife and Dream Streak within a few breaths.

Although the two sensed the incoming threat behind them and tried to evade the flaming blue spears, Vaan's fire attacks tracked whichever direction they took.

The flaming blue spears wouldn't stop until they hit their targets.

"No—!" Smiling Knife and Dream Streak cried at the inevitable outcome.

Puchi! Puchi! Puchi!

The flaming blue spears skewered their limbs and burned their flesh, causing rapid disintegration. Within a short breath, half of their limbs detached from their bodies.

After losing their mobility, Smiling Knife and Dream Streak still tried to escape, using their chins to crawl along the ground. But, alas, they could only move at a snail's pace.

At the same time, they heard Vaan's footsteps in the distance. Each step closer was like a hammer on their hearts and spirits, diminishing their hope bit by bit.

After Vaan reached Smiling Knife, he didn't speak a single word to the person, having lost interest. He grabbed Smiling Knife by the hair and dragged him to Dream Streak's location.

Then, he dragged the two back.

"Please don't kill me..."

"I'll be your dog if you let me live."

Dream Streak and Smiling Knife both pleaded for their lives along the way. They tried to persuade Vaan with various offers, even willing to submit themselves to him.

However, Vaan ignored their pleas and continued dragging them. Still, seeing how low they had fallen after being defeated was interesting.

'The older and stronger one is, the more they value life and fear death, huh?' Vaan thought amusedly.

After returning to the lord's estate, Vaan collected the dead bodies and spoils into his Heaven-Swallowing Space.

Then, he proceeded to create a long spear mold with Earth Manipulation, melted a few pieces of equipment with blue flames, and finally cooled the temporary weapon with Kinetic Energy Manipulation.

Once Vaan was done, he skewered the two surviving A-rank Witch Hunters and two S-rank Witch Hunters, turning them into a kebab stick before taking off for the Red Goblin Mountain north of town.

Some potions and mana stones were left behind to help Silvaria, Solana, and Dahlia recover their strength when he informed them that he'd be gone for a bit.

"Just who was that person?" Silvaria enquired with her gaze fixed on Vaan's disappearing back in the distance, still shocked by the unbelievable scene that unfolded earlier.

She had never seen such a powerful man before.

"Right." Silvaria suddenly recalled before anyone could answer and glanced at Cyrena. "You were calling him Teacher. How did—"

Before Silvaria could finish asking, she suddenly felt the town becoming brighter.

When she turned around to look, she immediately noticed a high wall of blue flames had sealed off the entire Sunpeak Town, preventing anyone from entering and leaving.

A few moments after, two new spatial portals opened before Astoria and Aeliana appeared, landing in the central town area.

"W-What happened here?" Astoria and Aeliana were startled. Astoria also wondered if she was too late.

"Headmaster Astoria! Aeli! It's great to see you both!" Solana quickly rejoiced at the appearance of the familiar figures. She ran up and embraced her baby girl. "It's good that you're alright, Aeli!"

"Sorry for making you worry, Mother," Aeliana apologized, revealing her rare soft side before she glanced around. "By the way, what happened here?"

"Come, I'll fill you in on the details inside," Solana dragged Aeliana back to the lord's estate.

...

Meanwhile, Vaan did not head too far north of Sunpeak Town with his human kebab stick since he needed to maintain the fire barrier.

Seeing that the forest area was quite dense, he settled for the location with a nod and knocked out his prisoners.

"Didn't think I would be using this so soon," Vaan muttered, taking out the large black cube.