

The Witch 501

Chapter 501: Henrietta's Weakness

"Well?" Vaan pressed, inching closer.

Henrietta's heart beat rapidly, and her head spun with dizziness from the blood rushing up to her head. She was caught off guard by Vaan, and her mind was a mess.

She needed time to compose herself.

Poof!

Henrietta suddenly took off, leaving Vaan without saying a single word. She flew into the thickest clouds nearby and disappeared from Vaan's view—or so she thought.

However, nothing within the range of Vaan's Omni-Sense could escape his detection.

That's why he had been aware of Henrietta's presence the moment she appeared in the sky and spied on him.

Nevertheless, Vaan did not chase after Henrietta; he remained in his place patiently.

At first, he ignored her because she showed no malice. But eventually, his curiosity got the better of him.

Based on his observation, Henrietta seemed to have telepathically conversed with someone.

However, the patrolling Rank 5 young dragon elites had confirmed that it was none of them or anyone else nearby.

Thus, Vaan understood Henrietta could only be conversing with someone within her mind, whether it was a type of split personality disorder or another soul residing in her body.

Of the two possibilities, most people would believe in the first one because they wouldn't even think the second possibility was possible.

However, Vaan quickly concluded it was the second possibility.

After all, he had read and heard many things about the Black Rose Transcendent Witch. And based on his personal observation, Henrietta did not appear to show any clear signs of mental illnesses; she was perfectly healthy in both body and mind.

Thus, it couldn't be a split personality disorder. But the probability of another soul residing in Henrietta's body was so low it didn't seem probable due to how rare it was. That's why most people wouldn't even think of it.

However, Vaan followed one straightforward rule for deducing from his previous world: the rule of elimination.

When the impossible is eliminated, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth – a wise man once said.

'Let me see what secrets you are hiding,' Vaan narrowed his eyes.

His Omni-Sense expanded to its limits as he focused on Henrietta's figure hiding within the thick white clouds.

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After Henrietta flew into the thick clouds, she patted her cheeks with both hands and fixed her expression and emotions with steady breaths.

Once she regained her composure and straightened out her thoughts, she flew back out to confront Vaan.

"Yes, you are right. I came to meet you, Vaan Raphna. Or Vahn Cadieux. Whichever you prefer," Henrietta coolly stated before asking, "Do you know why?"

"Oh? Please, pray tell, why do you want to meet me?" Vaan casually smiled.

Henrietta did well to maintain her calm composure. It was as if she had already forgotten the previous matter.

However, the moment Vaan revealed his devilish smile and sharp glint that seemed to pierce through her, Henrietta's heart was shaken once more.

Her calm expression crumbled apart as she turned around and fled back into the thick clouds to hide herself.

Ba-dum! Ba-dum! Ba-dum!

Henrietta's heart was beating like drums, loud and resonating, within her body. It threw her emotions into turmoil and made her uncomfortable.

She gripped her chest with a tight squeeze like she wanted to calm her heart down with force.

However, it proved futile.

'What's going on with me, Master? Why can't I seem to control my emotions in front of that person? There's also something wrong with his perverse gaze. It seemed like I was stripped naked and had all my secrets lay bare,' Henrietta said with palpitating, uneven breathing.

'...You might be right, Henrietta," Henrietta's master admitted and said, "I think my existence has been exposed, or at the very least, that man has become aware of my possible existence."

'This... Are you sure, Master? But how is that possible? We've only just met briefly,' Henrietta mentioned with a startled look.

'I should have known after seeing his perverse control of space,' Henrietta's master sighed.

'His intelligence, thought processing, and perception are on a whole different level than we can imagine. I really wonder how someone can have these abilities at his level. They have far surpassed the limits of mortals.'

'What should we do, Master?' Henrietta asked, sincerely seeking guidance.

'In any case, we will slowly learn more about him and his perverse abilities the more we interact with him. To do that, we must be upfront and open with him,' Henrietta's master stated.

'He isn't someone we can fool with half-witted lies. Do not hide it if he asks about me. But if he doesn't ask, there's no need to tell him either. Just act accordingly, Henrietta. Also, stop running away. It won't help you.'

'He might get the wrong idea,' Henrietta's master added.

'If I don't hide to calm my nerves, am I supposed to continue showing my vulnerable side to him, Master? You told me a woman must remain strong and calm in all situations...' Henrietta mentioned.

'Yes, that is correct,' Henrietta's master acknowledged.

'A strong woman must be calm in all situations. However, it was my mistake to make you stay away from all men up until now. Feeling shy and nervous around someone as charming and handsome as that man is normal, especially when you are inexperienced and have never been in love.'

'That's why you exhibit such strong feelings. You do not know how to deal with attractive men, especially someone of his quality. Still, it's not too late to learn. You just need to keep facing him from now on until you overcome these feelings of weakness.'

'Just don't fall in love with him. Love is a weakness. That's not something you need. You just need his body,' Henrietta's master strictly stated.

'Yes, Master.'

Henrietta couldn't help but smile helplessly and bitterly.

Her master didn't believe in love. And yet, she was still a traditional woman who believed men and women must be married before they could perform any intimate interaction.

Although it was outdated thinking, she still respected her master for it.

Such beliefs were rare in this day and age.

Nevertheless, thanks to her master's explanation, Henrietta finally understood the reason behind her palpitating heart.

Is this what it's like to be a 317-year-old inexperienced, virgin lady? Her body was screaming with excitement for a man's affection?

To think she would experience a setback due to her body's natural hormones...

'Dammit, it's all the fault of this underdeveloped body that has stopped aging! I refuse to succumb to the hormones of a teenager forever!' Henrietta swore defiantly.

Shortly after calming her nerves for the last time, she flew out of the clouds to confront Vaan once again.

At that moment, Vaan was rubbing his chin with an intrigued look as he faced Henrietta's direction.

Although Henrietta didn't speak a single word during her hiding, the internal conflict in her eyes still revealed a lot. In addition to her odd yet interesting behavior, Vaan was able to piece together a rough picture of the situation.

He didn't expect the high and mighty queen of the Black Rose Kingdom to face such a setback.

It was pretty interesting... and also cute.

He almost wanted to keep teasing her.

It didn't matter how old one was; they could still be young at heart. The only accurate measure of one's maturity was the depth of experience.

"Let's talk on the ground," Henrietta suggested.

"Alright," Vaan calmly agreed with a nod.

He could stay in the sky for extended periods without an issue, but he understood that Henrietta couldn't.

It consumed her mana over time.

That said, the consumption was still negligible. Still, Henrietta wanted to maintain a safe level of her mana reserve. It's something a wise person would do the same to be prepared for an unexpected situation or danger that may arise.

"So? Why did you want to meet me?" Vaan casually asked once they descended to the ground.

"I am a very close friend of Astoria. I wanted to see what kind of man she fell for in person," Henrietta coolly stated. She hesitated a bit before adding, "...And I can see why. You are very talented and handsome. There aren't many men as accomplished and capable as you."

"Oh? Is that so?" Vaan casually smiled. He boldly inched closer before slyly asking with vague innuendo, "Is that the only reason you wanted to meet me?"

Naturally, Vaan expected Henrietta to discuss matters related to his control over the kingdom. However, his words seemed to also imply Henrietta was interested in him.

"Well..."

Ba-dum! Ba-dum!

Henrietta had almost defense against Vaan's charms. Thus, her heart started racing and sending her emotions into turmoil again.

She instinctively wanted to flee the situation but remembered she had to face it head-on to overcome her weakness.

"Y-Yeah, there is another matter..." Henrietta replied in a soft, meek, and feminine voice that was unlike her before she suddenly roared, "Arghhh! This is not me! I am not normally like this!"

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Henrietta found herself a boulder nearby and repeatedly rammed her head against it to vent all her frustration.

Vaan was immediately taken aback by her extreme lengths.

Chapter 502: Unexpected Spacequake

Henrietta thought she could use the pain from bashing her head against the boulder to overcome the butterflies in her stomach. And as it turned out, the idea worked effectively.

Her shyness around Vaan quickly disappeared due to the pain overwhelming it.

But more importantly, the pain reminded her of her aching and exhausted body during the holy war against Gehenna three hundred years ago.

Compared to those desperate and trying times, her current challenge was nothing.

"Sorry about that. There were some unfamiliar feelings getting in my way," Henrietta vaguely explained with indifference before suggesting, "Shall we talk about something serious now?"

"Of course," Vaan casually agreed.

Once Henrietta received Vaan's agreement, she calmly nodded. They were bound to meet due to issues with the kingdom.

Fortunately, neither side seemed to bear any hostilities toward the other; they were off to a good start.

"You must understand that right now, you hold the kingdom's greatest authority and military might. People will follow your words over mine. This puts me, the current ruler, in a very awkward position," Henrietta coolly mentioned.

"While I won't condemn you for what you have done. In fact, I should commend you and reward you generously for the supremacist witch faction in their place and repelling the empire's invasion. You have solved two major issues this kingdom faced."

"Still, I have to ask. What do you intend to do with this kingdom after holding all that power?" Henrietta asked shortly after, sincerely seeking Vaan's honest answer.

"That is indeed a good question," Vaan uttered before asking himself with a mischievous smile, "What do I intend to do with the kingdom, I wonder?"

"Should I liberate the oppressed men and enslave the witches, letting them have a taste of their own medicine? Or should I leave things as they are, depraved and stagnant as they have been until now?"

Vaan made terrible suggestions as he studied Henrietta's briefly tensed-up expression before he softly chuckled.

"In fact, I care not for any of the hatred and discrimination between these two sides; they have nothing to do with me. The men and witches can continue to hate and discriminate against one another for all I care – is what I would like to say, of course."

"However, the truth is I cannot ignore this kingdom's failing society when it is what stands between this world and the next. For my people, I don't want this kingdom or Pangea itself to fall to Gehenna."

"So, here is what I intend to do – I will keep the slavery system. However, every man that was defaulted into slavery will be freed. Not only will they become free men, but I will also grant all men equal rights to knowledge and learning."

"I will not deprive witches of their land, but the supremacist witches must fork out half their wealth to construct a new district for men to develop their talents. In the future, men and women will compete fairly for benefits; there will be no oppression or killing."

"Those who break the law, regardless of their status, will be punished according to the severity of their crime. Light punishments will include loss of property and imprisonment. More serious cases will be the abolishment of cultivation or the death sentence."

"And in the most extreme case, the entire family will be executed," Vaan declared.

Henrietta was immediately flabbergasted.

She only wanted to know how Vaan would treat the people in the kingdom. She didn't expect him to explain everything to her in detail.

No, more important, why was he explaining everything in detail to her?

Was he expecting her to handle the reforms for him?

He didn't intend to do it himself?

When Henrietta realized that may very well be the case, the corners of her lips couldn't help but twitch.

In their present situation, they were practically both rulers of the kingdom. And yet, neither of them wanted to be tied down by the management responsibilities and work.

They both wanted something done and expected others to carry it out for them.

Nevertheless, given Vaan's power and capability, it didn't make any sense to tie him behind a desk full of paperwork, even if Henrietta knew he would excel at it.

However, she wasn't willing for the same reason, albeit without the latter part.

'This won't do,' Henrietta thought.

'Whether it is Vaan or I, we should be focusing on training to increase our power. That would be the best way to prepare for the seven Great Devils of Gehenna. I should appoint a prime minister to handle the kingdom's affairs.'

'Right! A prime minister is what we need!'

After Henrietta realized what they needed, she memorized Vaan's reform ideas in order to pass them on to her newly appointed prime minister when she found one later.

Nevertheless, there were a few points that made her frown.

"Aren't some of these punishments too harsh? If we try to implement these reforms, I'm afraid the witches won't agree and may even revolt..." Henrietta stated.

However, she quickly realized how foolish her words were.

After all, Vaan had absolute control over the witches living within the capital, thanks to the Oath of Magic, which he forced them to swear.

"Revolt... That is only an idea when people think they have a chance of succeeding. If the governing force is weak, people will naturally try to revolt against an outrageous reform," Vaan calmly stated.

"However, they wouldn't even dare to accommodate the thought if the governing force is absolute. If you want order, you must be strict with the law. These harsh punishments aren't just to scare the people; they must be enforced to establish the absoluteness of the law."

"Only then will it deter people from breaking them," Vaan said.

He understood human nature very well. Humans could be very lawless if they were given the chance. If people didn't fear the consequences or could get away with breaking the law, then they were more likely and willing to break it.

The law was a joke if it could not be enforced.

"You gave the supremacist witches too much freedom and weren't strict enough. That's why they were too lawless and didn't fully respect you. In other words, you let yourself become a pushover," Vaan casually said.

His words stabbed right into Henrietta's sore spot and made her feel ashamed. Still, Henrietta didn't argue.

"I won't deny it," Henrietta admitted.

Although the queen's position wasn't something she wanted as it was shoved onto her, it was also true that she didn't manage the kingdom well.

"Anyway, eliminating the oppression of men and enforcing the law is only the first step to leading the kingdom in the right direction," Vaan mentioned.

"This kingdom's potential growth won't be fully shown unless men and women can compete fairly yet competitively. Up until now, it had only shown a quarter of its potential due to the oppression of men and the lavish depravity of witches."

"That's why it was necessary to remove them," Vaan stated.

"Right," Henrietta fully agreed.

She was like a docile bird listening to the whispers of a wise sage, unaware that she had fallen back into Vaan's rhythm.

'What the hell are you doing, Henrietta? Why are you just listening to him preach like a student and her teacher? Don't forget about the demands! Marriage and dual practice! Ask him now!' Henrietta's master suddenly barked.

'Ugh... I can't do it, Master. It's not proper. This is my friend's man. I must seek her permission first,' Henrietta stated.

'You... Haiz, whatever. Do as you wish,' Henrietta's master sighed with resignation due to Henrietta's stubbornness.

However, she also couldn't help but admire and respect Henrietta's principles.

At the very least, she knew Henrietta was someone who repaid kindness with kindness. She didn't have to worry about her disciple breaking her promise to help her rebuild a new body once she gained sufficient power and materials.

'Thank you, Master,' Henrietta smiled at her master's understanding.

Meanwhile, Vaan read Henrietta's expressions and understood she was most likely conversing with someone in her mind again.

He thought it was a good opportunity to bring it up.

However, he suddenly frowned upon detecting subtle changes to the surrounding space near Gehenna's Gateway.

As such, he shifted his attention to investigate the anomaly.

At the same time, Henrietta and her master also noticed something wrong, albeit slightly slower than Vaan, especially Henrietta.

Henrietta only realized something was wrong after seeing Vaan's behavior.

Nevertheless, as Vaan stared at Gehenna's Gateway, his frown deepened.

Although Gehenna's Gateway was a dimensional crack that continued to expand over time, the growth has always been consistent.

As such, the surrounding space had always been, more or less, stable—at least until now.

Vaan could sense the surrounding space destabilizing as it twisted and shook—No, pulsated. The surrounding space was pulsating!

At first, it only happened around Gehenna's Gateway. But very quickly, it spread to the rest of the world.

'A spacequake?' Vaan's eyes flickered with a serious glint as he shifted his gaze to the skies.

He realized the source of spatial destabilization wasn't caused by Gehenna's Gateway but something else beyond their atmosphere.

However, the surrounding space around Gehenna's Gateway was the first to be affected due to its low stability and disintegration.

"This... could become a problem," Vaan uttered.

Chapter 503: Breaking Through the Sky

Gehenna Realm

In the devilish, gloomy, crimson world of Gehenna, the barren land near the dimensional crack continued to be enriched with new soil and trees from Pangea at an unnoticeably slow but sure and increasing rate.

As the dimension crack expanded, Gehenna would eventually devour all of Pangea and become a singular larger world.

Such an instance was considered even in Chaos, which had existed for countless chaos cycles.

After all, a natural fusion of two different worlds could only occur if the dimensional crack appeared at the precise point connecting both worlds.

Nevertheless, many demons of Gehenna had been looking forward to the completion of the world fusion process since the day the dimensional crack appeared.

An entire new world was waiting for them to explore, abundant resources waiting for them to plunder, and new races to play with – all without the suppression of the material world.

Around the vicinity of Pangea's Gateway, the former parts of the Great Ashfallen Forest could barely be recognized due to the changes in the environment and the universal laws.

Some Ashfallen Trees failed to adapt to the change and died, turning into dead trees, black and dry like charcoal, yet also tough like steel.

They were also logged to clear the path to Pangea's Gateway.

On the other hand, the rest of the Ashfallen Trees had transformed into sentient demon trees as a result of greedily absorbing the mana and dead spirits of those that had previously fallen in the holy war.

Nevertheless, this allowed the sentient demon trees to grow to unimaginable height and shape.

Many sentient demon trees had grown taller than the dimensional crack itself and tightly entangled each other with their overgrown branches.

As such, the dimensional crack's existence was also hidden from everyone outside the new forest they had collectively formed, the Illusory Demon Forest.

That said, the dimensional crack wasn't permanently obscured from the outside.

During the season of the crimson moon, where the crimson moonlight was at its brightest, the entire Illusory Demon Forest would disappear without a trace, as if it had never existed in the first place. Only a barren land with few dead trees would be left during its period of disappearance.

Hence, it was called the Illusory Demon Forest for that reason.

However, people would be sorely mistaken if they believed the Illusory Demon Forest was just a mere illusion to fool the eye and nothing more due to its disappearing feature.

It was not.

On the contrary, it was very real and even more treacherous. It was a hungry ghost forest that preyed on the living, always craving flesh and blood to nourish itself.

Humans and demons alike would have to tread carefully if they sought safe passage through it.

An enormous shell-looking mountain with a hollow interior could be found roughly a hundred miles north of the Illusory Demon Forest, past the desolate land where the remnants of an old castle ruin could be discovered with scarce vegetation and water source.

Contrary to the desolate land, the region with the enormous shell-looking mountain was rich in vegetation and water sources.

It was said that the enormous shell-looking mountain used to be the actual shell of a Realm Turtle born on the land.

Realm Turtles were mythical creatures that could grow to the size of starry celestial bodies.

Unfortunately, the Realm Turtle in this land died before it could reach adulthood after the sea dried up several hundred thousand years ago.

Inside the shell mountains, a strong clan of shadow wolves had created countless burrows, making the place their home.

After humans felled Fuhengir, the Demon Wolf King ruling the region, the Shadow Wolf Clan rose to power and replaced them as the new regional overlord, following the will of Balmodan the Undying.

At that moment, a gathering was taking place in the middle of the clan, a relatively large space with remnant traces of a fireplace, shortly after the spacequake occurred in Pangea.

It was their feasting ground.

Usually, only a few thousand shadow wolves would gather at the feasting ground at a time during their mealtimes. However, the entire clan was gathered for their summoning this time around. As such, it was a little overcrowded.

More than half the shadow wolves could only spectate outside the feasting ground.

Nevertheless, among the thousands upon thousands of shadow wolves gathered at the feasting ground, only a single half-man, half-wolf was present.

The wolf-man was the leader of the Shadow Wolf Clan, Thyrius.

In order to strengthen control over the region and not let history repeat itself, Thyrius was blessed with Balmodan's Immortal Lycan Bloodline and advanced into the semi-Divine stage, becoming an Early-stage Demigod.

"My kin, there's only one reason why I have gathered you all today! I will be leaving this region temporarily to report to my master at the Undying Devil Palace regarding the spatial changes at Pangea's Gateway!" Thyrius announced, full of vigor.

"Therefore, I am entrusting everyone to work hard and guard the region well during my absence! Of course, a clan cannot function without a leader, so Jackal will be in charge of the clan's matters until I return!"

"Jackal, come forward and receive my order!" Thyrius called.

However, not a single shadow wolf stepped forward after the name was called, even after some time passed. As such, Thyrius quickly lost his patience.

"Where the fuck is my little brother, Jackal?! Come out right now! You might be my little brother, but that doesn't mean you can disregard my words! Fucking hell, you must be tired of living! This is your last chance! If you don't come out immediately, I'll call you Jack-shit from now on!" Thyrius thundered angrily.

He repeatedly called out to Jackal but was only greeted with silence each time.

At the same time, his billowing rage and oppressive aura suppressed all the attending shadow wolves to the ground. Not a single shadow wolf dared to lift its head or even speak on Jackal's behalf—at least not until Thyrius's anger subsided or if they were called.

Nevertheless, Thyrius knew his little brother was sensible. Thus, after his short fit of anger, he quickly calmed down and thought things through.

"Does anyone know where the hell my little brother went? You look like you know. Tell me," Thyrius singled out a shadow wolf after noticing its expression.

Awroo!

The shadow wolf issued a series of short and intermittent howls, informing Thyrius how Jackal led a large group of clan elites to the Illusory Demon Forest to investigate a spatial anomaly prior to the spacequake disturbance.

"There was a spatial anomaly prior to the spacequake disturbance?" Thyrius frowned.

"Since that is the case, we'll leave it at that. It will take some time before he returns. Have someone inform him of his duties once he is back. I won't be waiting."

"My report cannot be delayed," Thyrius stated solemnly.

If he couldn't deliver the information and caused the master to fail in resolving any arising problem from Pangea's Gateway in time, he could easily lose the master's grace and even bear the master's wrath.

He might have the master's grace, but he understood his Shadow Wolf Clan was expendable; they could be replaced if deemed useless.

Awroo!

Shortly after the shadow wolves expressed that they had heard and understood Thyrius's words, he immediately departed without further delay.

Little did he know, Jackal and the group of elites he led wouldn't be coming back.

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Back on Pangea's side, Vaan left the Great Ashfallen Forest with Henrietta, but not without arranging for the Rank 5 young dragon elites to strengthen their watch over the region.

During the event of the brief spacequake, Henrietta was quickly made aware of a potential crisis that would affect everyone in Pangea.

Although neither Vaan nor Henrietta knew what caused the spacequake, they could at least see the spatial destabilization around the dimensional crack.

Even after the end of the spacequake, the dimensional crack continued to fluctuate with unstable levels of mana output.

Sometimes, mana would surge out from Gehenna, and sometimes, only a scarce amount would squeeze out.

However, the mana output in the dimensional crack wasn't a big problem.

The main issue was the unstable space causing Gehenna's Gateway to exhibit unpredictable behaviors, which could ultimately lead to an accelerated expansion in the dimensional crack.

"I will return to the capital and make preparations in case the worse happens," Henrietta said solemnly.

"And I will try to investigate the source of the spacequake," Vaan stated.

Shortly after Vaan and Henrietta said their piece, they flew their separate ways. Henrietta headed back to Blackthord City. And as for Vaan, he directed his attention to the starry sky.

'Fortunately, I made some progress in the Space Law,' Vaan thought.

He wasn't sure if it was a coincidence or not, but he did comprehend the Space Law in a timely manner. The Space Law would help him navigate the starry sky.

Furthermore, he was already a Peak-stage Demigod, even if only in the soul. Breaking through the sky was not a challenge.

Boom...

Vaan rapidly ascended the sky, leaving behind a trail of fire as he broke the sound barrier, followed by several short blinks through space.

In a short span of time, Vaan broke free from Pangea's gravity and left the planet behind, entering the endless darkness of space.

Although the vast expanse outside Pangea was dark, the cloudy skies and congested mana no longer obscured his vision.

As such, he could see the situation outside of Pangea very clearly.

Chapter 504: A Split in the Sea of Stars

The world was completely different in the infinite void of space that existed outside the boundary of Pangea.

Unlike the current Pangea, which possessed all the conditions to support life, the vast expanse of space was the complete opposite.

It had no air, no water, and no heat – nothing but nothingness.

Even if they were present in some region of the vast nothingness of space, they would still be too scarce and scattered to support life.

That's why the vast expanse was so cold for the most part.

Any forms of gas and dust particles that existed within its boundless region of vacant space were so distant that it limited their ability to collide and transfer heat.

It was a lifeless, cold, and unforgiving world.

Perhaps, the endless void in the sea of stars was a reminder to all life of what the world once was, what it is now, and what it will eventually be – nothingness.

Born from nothingness and return to nothingness.

'The cycle of life and death, creation and destruction... To think someone in the long history of Chaos was able to break free from this heartless cycle and rise above it,' Vaan mused.

Toward such a being, who had carved out a new path and allowed the continuation of life beyond the end of time, Vaan had nothing but pure respect.

Even if the being was forgotten through time and only the being's glorified achievement remained behind, Vaan could vaguely sense the sheer desperation and will to save everything as the world was ending during those moments.

It gave him goosebumps.

As someone who had barely stepped into the Divine, even Vaan found it difficult to fathom the sheer will required to surpass the cosmic boundary and rewrite the natural order of all things.

Nevertheless, Vaan only briefly admired the sea of stars and history before his casual gaze flickered with focus.

The first thing he noticed in the sea of stars was a thin, disconnected, red line extending as far as he could see.

What was the red line? Where was it headed? And why did it exist?

At first, Vaan didn't understand the answer to these questions because he peered into the distant stars.

However, the disconnected red line also extended to the Pangea system, passing through the asteroid field and even reaching a point on the moon. The disconnected red line was comprised of cracks in the dimension, splitting the vast sea of stars in two.

Furthermore, the behavior of these dimension cracks was far more unpredictable than Gehenna's Gateway.

The second closest dimensional crack located in the asteroid field further away from Pangea and the sun fluctuated like crazy – almost like a red, rubbery jelly being playfully stretched by a kid.

At normal times, it remained in a straight line. At other times, it turned into the shapes of spiky balls, crosses, ovals, diamonds, and squares.

There wasn't a fixed pattern to its fluctuation either; it was completely random.

Nevertheless, the fact that Vaan could observe these dimension cracks and even make their changes despite the great existing distance between them proved they were far, far larger than Gehenna's Gateway.

More importantly, Vaan did not know whether these dimensional cracks existed before the spacequake and were even responsible for it or if they were only formed after the spacequake.

As Vaan continued to study the dimensional cracks, he realized the dimensional cracks were mainly divided into three types: fixed, binding, and destructive.

Fixed dimensional cracks seemed to fluctuate the most.

Whether they inflate or deflate in size, their center would always remain fixed in space, which was why the compilation of dimensional cracks across the sea of stars looked like a straight line, to begin with.

On the other hand, the binding dimensional cracks were like Gehenna's Gateway – they were stuck to celestial objects like glue and followed their movement.

That's why Gehenna's Gateway didn't shift from the Great Ashfallen Forest in the north despite Pangea's rotation and orbit around the sun.

The dimensional crack on the moon was the same.

In a sense, these binding dimensional cracks had become a part of their host celestial bodies and acted more like connection points to Chaos.

Vaan guessed some shooting stars, celestial bodies, or large asteroids had crashed into the long dimensional crack, robbing them from the main line.

However, this conclusion didn't make much sense to him.

After all, it was strange for some dimensional cracks to break away from the main line splitting the sea of stars instead of simply devouring whatever celestial object was thrown at them.

Some hidden force was at work, which made it happen.

Vaan couldn't be certain what kind of force it was, but he was certain it existed. After all, Pangea and the moon had already set precedents for its possibility.

Nevertheless, fixed and binding dimensional cracks were the least of Vaan's worries.

Although there were some concerns regarding which part of Chaos they led to, at the very least, they didn't seem to pose immediate danger like the destructive dimensional cracks.

The destructive dimensional cracks didn't let anything pass through them. Anything that even came close to them disintegrated into nothingness.

How did he know this?

Because he could see large asteroids in the asteroid field disappearing before they could make contact with the destructive dimensional crack there.

Considering there was also a fixed dimensional crack located there, the contrast between the two was as clear as day to him.

'The Law of Nihilism...' Vaan's eyes narrowed.

Although he had some insights into nihilism, he also understood it wasn't a native power.

The Law of Nihilism only existed as a concept within the universe. Its actual power could only be found outside. As such, unless some talented person comprehended nihilism, the power of nothingness would, in most cases, never manifest in their world.

Unfortunately, he was now witnessing one instance that wasn't included in the 'most cases.'

He watched the power of nothingness seeping out of the destructive dimensional crack and eating away at the foundations of his chaosverse.

In other words, those destructive dimensional cracks were connected to the sea of nothingness.

'Chaos isn't as all-encompassing and boundless as I thought... At the very least, compared to the sea of nothingness, which existed from the start, Chaos is like a child that's still growing,' Vaan thought.

His chaosverse would be saved by Chaos.

Vaan did not doubt this.

However, he also understood that some parts of his chaosverse would still be lost to the sea of nothingness in the process.

Although it seemed like Vaan had observed the sea of stars for quite a while, not even five minutes had passed since he left the boundary of Pangea.

Of course, he could hold his breath for much longer than a mere five minutes.

However, thanks to the abundant air he previously stored within his Heaven-Swallowing Space, it was unnecessary for him to hold his breath.

After observing the sea of stars, Vaan concluded that the three types of dimensional cracks, at least existing within the Pangea system, had nothing to do with the spacequake.

Suddenly, Vaan sensed unprecedented danger.

At the same time, his pupils narrowed into slits almost instantly. He discovered multiple large shadows hurling toward him with incredible speed.

They were a group of asteroids heading for Pangea.

For him to sense such great danger at his level showed the force behind them was at least comparable to a Divine-rank attack or above.

Still, Vaan had more than enough to evade.

However, if he did so, the devastating impacts on Pangea would be unimaginable. He did not want to be left alone if they were planet killers.

'I have to stop them!' Vaan thought gravely.

Just when he steeled his determination to give it his all, the asteroids suddenly clashed against each other, triggering a series of spacequake-like explosions.

Although Vaan failed to determine the cause immediately, it was fortunate that the asteroids had shattered into numerous pieces and veered off course as a result of them.

The danger level was steeply cut down to Transcendent-rank attacks by a miracle.

Nevertheless, it still wasn't enough for Vaan to ignore them. If someone close to him were hurt because he dismissed the low-level danger, he would regret it.

'These minor asteroids could be extremely volatile,' Vaan quickly thought.

In that instant, he refrained from using his strongest ability, Fire Authority. Instead, he used his Space Authority and created a net of spatial whirlpools leading to his Heaven-Swallowing Space to catch them all in one fell swoop.

Unfortunately, the rain of asteroids was too widespread and exceeded his range.

Vaan could only cover the Black Rose Kingdom and roughly half of the Holy Knight Empire. The rest of the shattered asteroids that slipped past him rained down on other parts of Pangea.

Nevertheless, most of them either melted or exploded into azure light from the intense friction heat upon entering Pangea's atmosphere.

In the end, only less than a dozen meteors struck the planet, and the damage wasn't severe.

Although the crisis somehow averted itself, for the most part, Vaan was reminded how insignificant life on Pangea still was on the cosmic scale.

They were all specks of dust in the vast universe.

Shortly after Vaan calmed down, he took out a small piece of the asteroids from his Heaven-Swallowing Space and studied it.

Although the boulder-sized asteroid was mostly ordinary rock, one part was azure and emitted a crystal-like luster.

Furthermore, it possessed rich yet unfamiliar energy that also seemed beneficial to all life.

'What kind of energy is this?' Vaan wondered with surprise.

Chapter 505: A Minor Body Problem

The azure crystal wasn't just a mere container for the rich energy found within it. No, the azure crystal itself was a crystallization of the energy condensed together.

In other words, the azure crystal was pure energy.

Furthermore, Vaan discovered this pure energy could be manipulated by men, unlike mana. Simply by holding the azure crystal, he could extract its energy with a thought.

At first, control of the energy seemed weak and limited. But once it flowed inside and cycled through Vaan's body, it became increasingly easier to manipulate over time.

In essence, the level of control was directly related to the level of energy refining.

Nevertheless, the most important discovery wasn't the ability to control this energy but the potential benefits it granted to life.

Vaan had subconsciously cycled the unknown energy through his body according to his Heavenly Formless Dragon Art.

It was only a single cycle, but he had already reaped countless benefits.

The unknown energy didn't just increase his lifespan, but it also strengthened his body and increased his aura. It was much more effective than mana.

That said, mana wasn't necessarily inferior to this unknown energy. They simply had different strong points.

For example, mana could be transformed into virtually anything one could imagine if one was capable enough. As such, mana had a diverse range of magic applications.

On the other hand, the unknown energy Vaan obtained was more specialized. It focused on the evolution of life.

Nevertheless, from what Vaan could see, this unknown energy could also be used to create magic. After all, it was something akin to a mixture of vitality and mana.

Even so, the process of creating magic with it would definitely be more costly and complicated than mana.

It was inefficient.

'If I had obtained this unknown energy earlier, I wouldn't have needed to use up so many stones to reach Peak-stage Aura Lord,' Vaan thought.

Fortunately, he had upgraded his Way of the Formless Dragon to the Heavenly Formless Dragon Art during his battle with Emperor Renardier.

Now that he had this unknown energy, advancing to the Aura King rank would definitely be smoother and quicker.

Unexpectedly, he had picked some precious cultivation resources.

No, that wasn't quite accurate.

It should be said that the precious cultivation resources fell into his lap. He was just at the right place and at the right time. As such, he pocketed most of the precious resources.

Nevertheless, the rest of the asteroids that fell to Pangea most likely contained the same unknown energy within them.

Vaan didn't doubt that there would soon be an uproar over the unknown energy.

After all, he had realized the importance of the unknown energy for aura cultivation. Unless the other aura users were stupid, they would also recognize it as well.

'It's too late to chase after those fallen asteroids now, not to mention there's no need for me to do so,' Vaan thought as he directed his gaze toward the asteroid field.

Chasing after the asteroids that fell to Pangea would be like ignoring the big cake and chasing after the crumbs.

Vaan hoped the asteroid field would be full of azure crystal energy.

Nevertheless, he found it strange that there were so many asteroids in the Pangea system and that such asteroids would also contain such miraculous energy within them.

Where did such miraculous energy come from? Why were they found within the asteroids? Why didn't Pangea have such energy?

As Vaan pondered over these questions, he played with a strand of azure energy he had refined. The strand of azure energy skillfully wiggled around his fingertips exactly the way he wanted.

'What a peculiar energy you are,' Vaan thought with a frown.

It was his first time coming across such a unique energy. As such, it was definitely unfamiliar. And yet, he couldn't help but get a familiar and natural feeling from it.

Perhaps, it was natural for such energy to exist alongside life. But for some reason, Pangea was stripped from any of it?

Vaan couldn't help but think in this direction.

In that case, the enormous field of asteroids in the Pangea system... Could it be the remnants of shattered planets where life used to exist on a much larger scale than Pangea?

And if it was, what kind of force reduced it to such a state?

Whatever happened, it certainly wasn't a small event.

That's for sure.

'Speculating won't get me answers, and the asteroid field is too far to investigate for now. It's also unknown what other dangers await me there. I should become stronger before I even consider it an option,' Vaan thought.

With his current abilities, he was simply incapable of investigating the asteroid field quickly.

After all, just because he could see the asteroid field in the Pangea system, it didn't mean he could reach it.

An astronomical distance existed between them.

If he stocked up enough air and food, he could certainly reach the asteroid field and research the origins of the azure energy with due time.

However, that was the exact problem – time.

Traveling to the asteroid field and back would take far too long. It was hard to predict what could happen in Pangea during this period.

If his people faced danger during his absence, he would be helpless to save them.

'It's unfortunate, but I will have to find another way to learn more about this mysterious azure energy,' Vaan lamented.

The system did not have any information on the azure energy.

If it knew what the azure energy was, it would have already notified him when he refined a strand of it in his body.

The system wasn't all-knowing, as far as he understood.

Since the system originated from Chaos, expecting it to have all information on his chaosverse would be too much.

But at the same time, the azure energy seemed like a fundamental energy of the universe and should have also existed in the previous chaosverses that entered Chaos in the past chaos cycles.

As such, Vaan couldn't really explain why the system lacked the information.

He could only assume the information was missing because the system was either incomplete or damaged.

'For now, I should advance to the Aura King rank,' Vaan decided.

After that, he intended to meet up with Henrietta again. He had a feeling she would know something about the azure energy.

Even if she didn't, the person behind her most likely would.

...

Shortly after Vaan tightened his grip on the boulder-sized asteroid, he immediately extracted all its azure energy in an instant.

However, the amount of azure energy was so tremendous that he had to temporarily store it inside his Heaven-Swallowing Space.

If he didn't, he would have suffered a severe backlash from the overflowing azure energy course through his veins.

Nevertheless, once the azure energy was extracted, Vaan began running the Heavenly Formless Dragon Art.

Ding!

<You have absorbed a large amount of unknown energy>

<Your body is being strengthened by the unknown energy>

<Your lifespan has increased by 150 years>

<Your aura power has increased by 200 units>

...

Ding!

<Your aura power has surpassed a bottleneck>

<Your aura cultivation has advanced to the next rank>

<Peak-stage Aura Lord à Early-stage Aura King>

Vaan continued receiving a string of notifications from the system until his aura power crossed the threshold and entered the ranks of Aura King.

However, his aura power did not stop there.

It kept rising.

The azure crystal inside the boulder-sized asteroid was only the size of a full-grown carrot, but the energy found within it was heavily concentrated and dense – far more than even the mana found inside supreme-rank mana stones.

The two could not be compared at all.

As the leftover azure energy

Ding!

<Your body is being strengthened by the unknown energy>

<Your lifespan has increased by 20 years>

<Your aura power has increased by 100 units>

...

Ding!

<Your body is being strengthened by the unknown energy>

<Your lifespan has increased by 10 years>

<Your aura power has increased by 50 units>

...

Vaan's aura cultivation continued to advance as he drew out the azure energy from his Heaven-Swallowing Space in a steady stream.

He didn't intend to stop until he reached a bottleneck or the azure energy from the carrot-sized azure crystal was exhausted.

Ding!

<You have completely refined all of the unknown energy>

<Your aura power has greatly improved>

<Aura power: 1250 à 1705>

<Your aura cultivation has reached the next threshold>

<Early-stage Aura King à Mid-stage Aura King>

...

Only after Vaan advanced a little past the threshold of Mid-stage Aura King did he finally exhaust all the azure energy he extracted from the carrot-sized azure crystal.

"Fuu..."

Vaan exhaled a long breath of foul air as he reopened his eyes and inspected the significant changes in his body. He should have been happy with his great progress during the inspection.

However, the first thing he did was frown.

The cultivation of his fleshly body was not the same as his soul. It wasn't something that could be rapidly improved without consequences.

Cultivation was supposed to be a gradual process in order to give the body time to adapt to the changes.

The mortal body had its limitations.

However, Vaan was able to avoid these limitations and make rapid improvements until now because he possessed a Divine-rank bloodline and a powerful physique.

'My aura cultivation grew too quickly. The dragon aura has become too strong, putting a slight strain on my veins and meridians...' Vaan analyzed.

The slight strain wasn't a problem, thanks to his power Celestial Dragonwolf Physique.

If he wanted, he could keep pushing to Peak-stage Aura King before the strain on his veins and meridians became a problem.

However, there was no need to punish himself like that.

Given the great potential of his body, it wouldn't take that long for it to adapt to his current aura cultivation.

'It seems I shouldn't delay my visit to the Great Ratholos Empire... Once I settled everything in the Black Rose Kingdom and Holy Knight Empire, I should make the trip immediately,' Vaan thought.

Chapter 506: Major Discovery

Before Vaan decided to return to Pangea, he cast a sweeping glance at the surrounding region of space one more time.

When his gaze landed on the moon, he suddenly paused in thought.

The asteroid field might be too far for a trip with his current abilities, but Pangea's moon was definitely within reach.

Although he was strongly curious about the azure energy's origin, he shouldn't ignore the moon's binding dimensional crack.

'Let's investigate it,' Vaan decided.

...

Three hours later, Vaan reached the moon's surface after traveling nonstop at his maximum speed and space-jumping a thousand times throughout the trip.

'About 400,000 kilometers, huh?' Vaan calculated the distance between Pangea and the moon.

To travel such large distances within three hours would have been unthinkable on Pangea with his current capability.

However, in the vacuum of space, it was possible.

Nevertheless, even Vaan felt three hours was still too long. After all, he still had to make the round trip later.

To travel at full power for six hours... Even if it didn't exhaust him, it was still tedious.

And this was only for the moon.

As for the asteroid field, Vaan wasn't quite sure how far it was. But based on his rough estimate, he could be looking at anywhere between 400,000,000 to 650,000,000 kilometers in distance.

In other words, the asteroid field was at least a thousand times further than the moon. It would take him more than four months to reach the asteroid field and over eight months for a round trip.

Furthermore, this was under the assumption that he could travel at full power throughout the long trip.

It was more accurate to say the round trip would take him at least one year.

Naturally, Vaan would not want to make such a long trip.

After all, he could achieve a lot of things in a year. Why would he waste it on travel time? He didn't have so much leisure time to waste on interstellar travel.

If working for a black company was the thing Vaan hated most in his previous life, the commuting hours would take second place on his hate list.

So much precious time was wasted just to get to and from work.

However, it was all behind him now.

After shaking his head, Vaan surveyed his surroundings on the moon.

Besides its soil composition, Pangea's moon did not seem that different from Earth's moon in his previous life; they were both full of craters and had a thin, non-breathable atmosphere.

Nevertheless, Vaan didn't visit Pangea's moon to sightsee and make comparisons.

After failing to discover anything of interest and value on the moon, he made his way to the dimensional crack, which was located in one of the larger craters.

Unlike Gehenna's Gateway, which was vertical like a standing mirror, the moon's dimensional crack was flat like a reflection on the water's surface.

More importantly, the moon's binding dimensional crack was incomparably larger than Gehenna's Gateway.

Fortunately, there was no sign of danger. Only mana poured out from the moon's dimensional crack. Safe to say, it was a dimensional crack connected to Chaos.

Whereabouts in Chaos? Vaan had yet to determine.

However, not a single demon had passed through the dimensional crack. Most likely, they had yet to discover the dimensional crack.

Of course, normal demons wouldn't be able to survive on the moon for long, even if they came. But that's also only if they were stupid.

Considering mana was pouring out of the dimensional crack much faster than Gehenna's Gate, it was only a matter of time before mana covered the entire moon.

In a sense, the mana would become an additional layer to the moon's atmosphere.

Intelligent demons would only need to use magic to terraform the moon into an inhabitable environment.

Thus, that was also another cause for concern.

However, Vaan had reached the moon first and did not intend to give the demons such an opportunity.

'Fortunately, the other side appears to be a secluded place,' Vaan thought as he studied the dimensional crack from the edge of the enormous crater.

Judging by the appearance of natural rock formations, the pitch-black darkness of the space, and the long resonating echo of soft dripping water, among other small details, the other side appeared to be located in some enclosed, large underground pocket space.

It could even be an undiscovered, vacant secret realm.

Since oxygen was also flowing out from the dimensional crack, Vaan knew he could breathe on the other side without consuming his own air supply.

After Vaan finished his brief surveillance, he immediately dived down. He passed through the dimensional crack and entered the other side for further investigation.

The moment he entered Chaos, Vaan's mind was on full alert for hidden presences and dangers.

Even though he had already concluded that underground space was secluded with no signs of life, it was still an educated assumption based on his observation with limited information.

He couldn't be careless when venturing into the unknown.

Nevertheless, once Vaan confirmed the absence of threats, he slightly relaxed his vigilance. Soon, he spread out his perception and studied the difference in the world's laws.

Although Vaan had grown incomparably strong compared to most people in Pangea, he had never felt invincible... until he entered Chaos.

A feeling of omnipotence subconsciously welled up inside him shortly after he entered this vast unknown world.

It felt like he could do anything and everything with just a thought – almost like the world was at his command.

He felt welcomed by the world.

In the world of Chaos, overflowing with the power of existence, everyone had the qualification to cultivate and pursue the everlasting.

Chaos did not discriminate and gave all life equal opportunity and the ability to raise their level of existence.

As long as one's level of existence was high enough, one could freely destroy and create the world with just a thought.

The world was theirs to bend and reshape as they pleased.

"So this is Chaos... It certainly feels different..."

Vaan marveled at the sensation of freedom as if invisible shackles had been removed from his body.

If he had not reached Peak Demigod rank in his soul and hit a bottleneck, Vaan had a feeling he could have raised his soul rank with breakneck speed by absorbing the power of existence found throughout the world.

Of course, the so-called power of existence was mana.

However, the mana Vaan currently sensed felt different from the one in Pangea and Gehenna. It felt pure and unadulterated.

As such, it was mana that he, a man, could actually manipulate!

"There's a problem with Gehenna's mana," Vaan's eyes flickered with realization.

He immediately understood the heart of the problem that plagued all men on Pangea. Gehenna's mana was incompatible with human males.

Of course, Vaan had long understood that.

However, he never expected the incompatibility only applies to mana from Gehenna. Mana from other realms in Chaos wasn't necessarily incompatible as well.

This was a history-changing discovery!

Men finally had an opportunity to cultivate their magic like witches. They just needed mana that came from another realm in Chaos!

"No... Given the distance, could this place really be another realm other than Gehenna?" Vaan suddenly thought deeper.

It was still possible he was in Gehenna and not some other realm in Chaos.

After all, he was currently underground. There was still a chance that the mana in Gehenna's underground was different from its surface.

In other words, some factors on the surface affected the mana to become incompatible with men. It could even be a great scheme from the Seven Great Devils to limit humanity's growth!

Of course, the latter was quite improbable.

Vaan didn't believe the Seven Great Devils were so capable that they could predict the appearance of the dimensional crack and tamper their mana beforehand.

As such, it was most likely an issue with Gehenna's surface environment that altered the mana.

"It's just as I suspected. I can truly control this kind of pure mana without a problem..." Vaan muttered.

He freely absorbed the surrounding mana and circulated it through his body's channels.

Within mere seconds, Vaan formed the first mana ring around his with the abundant pure mana from the enormous dark cave.

However, he felt like the standard cultivation process of magic was too simple and underdeveloped to satisfy him.

As such, Vaan shattered the mana ring and simply stored the mana in his Heaven-Swallowing Space for the time being.

Nevertheless, he had confirmed it was truly possible for men to cultivate magic with this kind of pure mana.

It was already tried and tested.

That said, Vaan suddenly felt sympathy for all the men from the Wizard Tower. They had all castrated themselves to embark on the path of magic cultivation as wizards.

"I wonder how the wizards would feel once I make known that men could cultivate magic without needing to castrate themselves..." Vaan rubbed his chin, intrigued by his own thoughts.

The wizards had already made their choice and accepted the price. Even if they felt great regret, they could only live with it.

After all, their PPs weren't coming back.

Chapter 507: Vaan's Mana Cultivation Path

Of course, it's not like there was absolutely no way for wizards to regain their manhood. The only issue was whether the solution was acceptable or not.

After all, it was hard to say whether the seeds produced from their transplants were truly theirs or the original host.

It was a debatable topic based on perspective.

That said, there wouldn't be any mental barriers if the transplantation involved their own severed manhood. It would just be reattaching what was lost.

However, Vaan doubted all wizards would have kept their severed manhood, let alone preserved in good condition.

Anyhow, transplantation was just the most straightforward method.

If one took the boundless potential of magic into consideration, it was definitely possible to regrow broken limbs and organs with higher-rank healing magic.

However, it would require an extremely-skilled healer with a complete micro-level understanding of the human body.

No matter how versatile magic was in its applications, it still followed the universal laws of the world.

For example, any witch could conjure an entry-level fireball spell. But the fireball's destructive power and mana consumption could greatly vary based on their level of understanding of fire.

Magic was the process of transforming mana to manifest one's will.

Thus, if the will coincide with the universal laws of the world, the success of magic would be more easily achieved.

If a witch had a complete understanding of fire, she would be able to consume the least amount of mana to demonstrate the greatest destructive power of the fireball spell.

On the other hand, if the witch had absolutely no understanding of fire, the fireball spell would definitely fail.

After all, if the witch didn't even know what they wanted to produce, how could they expect the world to manifest it precisely the way they wanted it to be?

They couldn't just ask for fire and not explain what kind of fire they want, how they want it to burn, and why it burns the way it does.

The less they understood about fire, the more mana they wasted to make up for what they lacked to complete the spell.

There was only one instance where a person with zero understanding of fire could still conjure a fireball spell – by possessing overwhelming will and mana.

And someone with overwhelming will and mana had to be an extremely powerful existence.

However, if such an extremely powerful existence with no understanding of fire could actually use their mighty will and power to brute-force their way into conjuring a fireball spell, it would no longer be considered a fireball spell.

It might have the appearance of a fireball, but its properties could be completely random, chaotic, or unrelated to fire.

In other words, it would just be a destructive power that looked like a fireball.

When the magic they wanted to cast had no support from any existing universal laws due to lacking the most fundamental understandings, they practically forged new universal laws to support their magic.

That's why it would cost so much will and mana to manifest.

It was also why ordinary witches would fail; they didn't have anywhere near enough will and mana to manifest such a vague and obscured fireball spell.

The same rules applied to healing magic.

If the healer didn't completely understand what the missing limb or organ they were trying to regrow, the cost of will and mana would be so exorbitant that it would cause the healing magic to fail.

Knowing the appearance and surface functions weren't enough.

One would also need to understand the elements that make up the body part, their cellular structure, interpersonal relationships and functions with the rest of the body, and more to reduce the healing magic's requirement to the greatest extent.

In the world of magic, knowledge was indeed power.

A tower could not be built without its foundations, and a ship could not be sailed unless it was first built.

...

From what Vaan understood about mana cultivation, the heart was not the best place to store mana for magic.

Since one's will and mana were so closely related in the manifestation of magic, storing mana somewhere near the mind made far more sense.

Three hundred years ago, perhaps the heart was indeed the best place to store mana since it was the era of blind magic exploration.

Back then, people had yet to extensively research and understand all the mysterious forces and elements of the world. Thus, their consumption of mana to manifest magic was much higher. And since the mana gathered and flowed through the heart the most, it became their obvious choice.

There was also the risk factor – accumulating mana in the heart was much safer than in the brain.

After all, if it were the heart, a mistake in entry-level cultivation would only slightly injure them at most. On the other hand, if it were the brain, the same mistake could result in mental disabilities or brain death.

A person with brain death was no different from being dead.

Nevertheless, that was all in the past.

Things were no longer the same as it was three hundred years ago. Pangea had accumulated much theoretical and practical knowledge of magic. Manipulating mana to produce magic was much easier and safer.

As such, this outdated mana cultivation method was no longer suitable.

It was inefficient and primitive.

'The body has three natural locations for storing energy – the Upper Dantian in the brain, the Middle Dantian in the heart, and the Lower Dantian in the stomach,' Vaan recalled.

For mana cultivation, he had already decided on the Upper Dantian.

However, changing the mana accumulation point was not enough. He intended to alter the whole mana cultivation method entirely.

He wasn't going to form the mana rings again.

The mana rings were only formed to aid witches in controlling multiple magic simultaneously. They run each spell autonomously by injecting their will into each mana ring.

In other words, the mana ring's only advantage was to assist witches in multi-tasking control of magic.

Outside of this advantage, Vaan only saw disadvantages.

Not only did the mana rings take up a lot of space around the heart, but their movements were also limited by the veins in the way. They could only rotate in specific directions. This, in turn, limited the extent of mana compression.

As a result, it had a greater demand on the strength of one's will with each additional mana ring formed.

The strength of the will was already weakened in order to reach the heart, and yet it was further weakened by the structure of the mana rings.

It was like trying to fill up a jar with scrunched-up newspaper.

Many gaps would be created, and it would take a lot of crushing strength to reduce them. And even then, gaps would still exist unless one had absolute power to crush those last few tiny gaps into nonexistence.

As such, choosing a jar that could store water was better. The only effort required to fill the jar's space was accumulation.

The Upper Dantian was the ideal location for mana. That's why Vaan chose it; he wouldn't have to face unnecessary bottlenecks.

...

Shortly after Vaan formed a solid mana cultivation method in his mind, he immediately entered a seated meditative position on the ground.

Mana gathered right after, rushing towards the glabella in between his eyebrows, where the Upper Dantian was located.

Thanks to his fast absorption rate, the abundant rich mana formed a visible whirlpool as they funneled into Vaan's glabella.

His Upper Dantian quickly filled up with pure mana as he greedily devoured them all, unhindered.

Since mana existed in a gaseous state, they quickly occupied the space within Vaan's Upper Dantian. But even after the space was filled up, pure mana kept flowing inside in a fast, continuous, consistent stream, causing the pure mana to become compacted.

However, Vaan didn't try to control the direction of the mana's compression. Instead, he left it to condense naturally.

Mana had its own natural flow while it was in its gaseous state.

Just like the wind and river, Vaan only needed to follow the current and not go against it. The more he tried to control such a torrential amount of mana, the less he had control.

Before long, the gaseous mana formed a drop of liquid at the center of the Upper Dantian.

Over time, more drops of liquid formed, adding to the initial drop of liquid mana at the center and increasing in mass.

At first, the blob of liquid mana appeared unstable as it fluctuated in all directions unpredictably.

However, Vaan wasn't concerned and observed the situation calmly. He only needed to keep absorbing mana and trust the process.

Eventually, a small part within the liquid mana mass solidified and formed a magnetic field.

In that instant, the surrounding mana swirled around it like how the sea of stars orbited their super black hole.

The gaseous mana followed the cosmic flow.

Thanks to the revolving mass of gaseous mana, the liquid mana mass with a solid center gradually stabilized and settled for a spherical form.

The three states of matter could be observed within Vaan's Upper Dantian.

Although such a different mana cultivation process would unlikely form the Magic Domain, Vaan didn't need one.

After all, he had the Heaven-Swallowing Space.

'This is how mana cultivation should be done. The height of magic shouldn't be based on the quantity of one's magic power but the quality refinement of it,' Vaan mentally sighed.

After sensing the incredible magic power emanating from his Upper Dantian, he became even more certain that he had chosen the best path.

Chapter 508: Priceless Resource

Although Vaan had already absorbed mana equal to an Early-stage Senior Witch, the accumulated amount in his Upper Dantian was less than a Peak-stage True Witch.

However, that didn't mean he lost a portion of the mana.

As the nebulous cloud of mana followed the cosmic flow in Vaan's Upper Dantian, it continuously refined itself into higher-quality refined mana, strengthening the magic power.

Thus, even if he only had the mana supply of Peak-stage True Witch, its output was equivalent to an Early-stage Senior Witch—or possibly even stronger.

However, this was only the initial result of Vaan's short cultivation.

His magic power would keep increasing as he continued refining nebulous mana clouds and strengthening his mana core. And the stronger his mana core became, the faster the refinement and recovery of mana.

In other words, the gap between Vaan and other wizards and witches at the same rank would only widen over time.

If there were only one downside to Vaan's seemingly powerful mana cultivation, it would be the difficulty and mana demand.

The difficulty and demand for mana would increase exponentially with every advancement.

However, Vaan believed this was an acceptable price.

If he wanted to become the strongest, a mighty being that could no longer be threatened and stepped on by others, knowing the path was not enough. He had to put in more hard work than anyone else. Naturally, he would also require more resources than anyone else.

This power-hungry path pursued the absolute peak of magic and truth. All obstacles in the way would and had to be crushed.

Just by looking at the solidifying core at the center of the Upper Dantian, it was like a black hole, greedily and endlessly devouring everything around it and turning them into power it could use.

'An insatiable appetite for power, and ambition as grand as the universe... This is the path of the warlock,' Vaan's eyes flickered with an unfathomable glint.

Since he didn't trade his manhood for the ability to cultivate magic, he naturally needed a different name from the wizards, lest it invite misunderstandings.

Nevertheless, after Vaan stabilized his mana cultivation at the Peak-stage True Warlock rank, he ended his cultivation and didn't continue further.

So long as Vaan had the dark underground space to himself, there would be plenty of chances to cultivate his magic.

However, it wasn't the purpose of his trip.

'This underground space is rather vast. I wonder how far it extends,' Vaan glanced around as he resumed his investigation.

When he spread out his Omni-Sense, the end of the underground cave could not be seen.

And when it seeped through the ceiling... Well, there was no need to consider the ceiling for the time being. The enormous dimensional crack completely covered the underground cave's ceiling.

Naturally, Vaan wouldn't be able to discover the surface even if he sent his Omni-Sense past it.

He would only see the surface of the moon.

Still, it didn't change the fact that the underground space was incomparably vast and possibly very deep as well.

Judging by the rock formations and overall layout of the underground space, Vaan concluded the place had either existed for a very long time or been formed over such a period.

There were no signs of life or any traces of their visit – This remained true as Vaan explored the vast underground space.

However, the gentle breeze flowing through the vast underground space suggested a high possibility of an existing opening. And if there was an opening, it implied there was a way into the underground space from the outside world.

Of course, there was also a low chance that the soft breeze didn't come from an opening but a natural wind-type oddity that formed within the underground cave.

Either way, Vaan made it the direction of his investigation.

Still, the potential opening or wind-type treasure wasn't the sole reason for his choice of direction. The subtle echo of dripping water also came from the same direction.

Although Vaan couldn't see the ceiling, the underground space was similar to the one in the Blackmoon Region, albeit on a far grander scale. Even so, that was more than enough to excite him regarding his potential discovery.

As the source of the dripping water became clearer over time, Vaan started to see more stalagmite formations in the vast underground space.

Eventually, Vaan finally reached the edge of the dimensional crack that hung above his head. As such, it no longer obstructed his Omni-Sense from seeing past the underground ceiling.

However, just as he suspected much earlier, the underground space was incredibly deep under the earth.

The surface was outside of the detection range of his Omni-Sense.

Nevertheless, Vaan didn't dwell on it and continued to follow the direction of the dripping water and gentle breeze.

The closer he got to the source, the more stalactite and stalagmite he found.

However, the more interesting point Vaan noticed about the hanging stalactites was the direction of their formation. Their tips didn't point directly down but were on an angle, pointing diagonally in a particular direction.

As Vaan observed more such tilted stalactites on the ceiling, he found out they collectively created a spiraling cone-like formation.

In other words, there was a single point where the tips of these several hundred thousands of tiled stalactites intersected.

There were all pointed to one single, very specific location.

If Vaan wasn't wrong, that specific location was also where all the dripping water gathered and accumulated over the years.

Although the formation of stalactites was extremely rare and unheard of, Vaan could only consider it possible because it was in Chaos.

Since Chaos was a world that the will of the mighty could freely change, the only thing that made sense in Chaos was that nothing could make sense.

However, even if the stalactites' spiral cone formation might have formed naturally in Chaos, it was also the only point of interest he had discovered to be unnatural thus far.

As such, Vaan couldn't help but feel more vigilant and swept the area with Omni-Sense several times as a precaution against hidden dangers. Alas, he still didn't find anything remotely threatening.

Even so, he couldn't shake off the feeling that something was wrong.

Either way, Vaan still decided to take the risk to explore the area.

'If the dripping water source is what I think it is, the risk is worth it,' Vaan thought as he ventured deeper and deeper into the underground space.

Before long, Vaan reached the source of the dripping water sound. A large white lake could be found straight ahead. Above it, the spiral cone formation of stalactites pointed down at it like an inverted pyramid.

The occasional drops of white liquid from the tip caused splashes in the white lake.

Although the droplets of white liquid generated some subtle shifts in the wind with its splashes, it was not the source of the soft breeze in the underground space.

As such, the possibility of the opening wasn't gone.

It still existed.

However, that was the least of Vaan's concerns at present. His eyes lit up the moment they landed on the white lake.

'Stalactite Milk!' Vaan rejoiced.

Just as he had anticipated, the underground space had Stalactite Milk.

Furthermore, it wasn't just a pond of Stalactite Milk but an entire lake of it! And most importantly, its age and potency were far greater than ten thousand years!

Even Vaan could not accurately guess the Stalactite Milk's age at a glance.

However, he was confident it was at least over a hundred thousand years. Such potency and amount were more than enough to raise his Earth Spirit Body to the next level.

In fact, the Stalactite Milk Lake was far too much for one person's usage.

Vaan could create a whole army of genius earth-attribute witches with the Stalactite Milk Lake if he so chooses to.

Still, that was something he would consider another time.

Without further adieu, Vaan created a large spatial portal and drained the Stalactite Milk Lake into his Heaven-Swallowing Space.

"This whole trip has been incredibly fruitful," Vaan grinned.

After acquiring the azure crystals and lake of Stalactite Milk, Vaan could be considered extremely wealthy.

In fact, he could already be considered the wealthiest person in Pangea.

If he put a small bottle of the hundred-thousand-year Stalactite Milk up for auction, all the influential and wealthy figures in the world would raise a storm fighting over it.

That was how valuable Vaan saw the Stalactite Milk.

"Such a precious resource... The potency of this Stalactite Milk is enough for regular people to call it an elixir from the gods," Vaan muttered thoughtfully.

Suddenly, his gaze flickered before disappearing from the spot with a spatial shift.

Boom!

Not even half a breath after Vaan disappeared, the spiral cone formation of stalactites slammed into the ground with tremendous force.

The ground couldn't withstand the impact and shattered, shaking up the whole underground space with terrible rumbles!

"It would be strange if such a priceless resource wasn't guarded... But what am I facing?" Vaan narrowed his eyes.

He still didn't detect any nearby life, even until the last moment.

Chapter 509: Earth Elemental

Shortly after Vaan escaped the sudden attack from above, his gaze flickered with a severe glint as he watched the spiral cone-shaped stalactite formation move.

They weren't just simple stalactites hanging from the ceiling; they were part of a much larger earthen entity – one that didn't seem to possess a shred of life force.

Rumble...!

After the giant earthen entity slammed into the ground, it continued drilling deeper into the earth. It moved so quickly that it was like a fish in the sea; the hard rocks in the earth failed to impede its movements.

They were simply like soft tissues in front of the giant earthen entity – easily torn apart.

Nevertheless, as the giant earthen entity continued drilling deeper and deeper into the depths of the subterranean region, Vaan could see the rest of its hard rocky body passing through the vast underground space.

At the same time, a three-dimensional image of the giant earthen entity's body slowly formed in his head.

However, it was only after the giant earthen entity completely disappeared into the deeper depths of the subterranean region did Vaan form a complete image of the giant earthen entity's whole body.

The giant earthen entity's form resembled a rock worm – its outer body was completely covered in hard rock-like scales, and the countless thousands of stalactites were actually its teeth.

The Stalactite Milk was something like drool excreted from its mouth.

Nevertheless, the giant earthen entity's outer appearance was the extent of its resemblance.

Beyond that, the giant earthen entity was anything but a rock worm. At the very least, it wouldn't be an ordinary rock worm if it was one.

Its body was simply huge to an unprecedented scale!

Based on Vaan's visual measurement, the giant earthen entity measured just a little over 100 kilometers long and 4 kilometers wide!

Calling it colossal would still be an understatement of its sheer size!

And because it wasn't just enormous beyond belief but also very fast, Vaan immediately viewed it as a considerable threat.

"What kind of creature is this?!" Vaan frowned.

Rumble...!

'It's coming back!' The slight tremors in the ground immediately alerted Vaan. His eyes instantly flickered with a sharp glint.

Boom!

Vaan's figure disappeared from the location with another spatial shift just moments before the solid ground beneath him shattered, giving way to the giant earthen entity.

After the giant earthen entity missed Vaan, it continued shooting upward and entered the dimensional crack hanging above.

Vaan had retreated a great distance, and yet the giant earthen entity still managed to locate him.

If the first attack was just a coincidence, then the second attack was a certainty. Vaan was the target of the giant earthen entity's attacks.

After the giant earthen entity completely left the dark underground space, Vaan discovered the two newly-formed abysses the giant earthen entity left behind.

They were around the same dimension as the existing underground space.

In other words, the dark underground space must have been formed by the giant earthen entity passing through the earth. Unfortunately, all traces of its movement had faded away over the terribly long years.

As such, Vaan failed to discover how the dark underground space was truly formed.

Nevertheless, after the two attacks, Vaan got a deeper understanding of the giant earthen entity's bodily structure.

It might look like an oversized rock worm, but it had no life; it was purely inorganic and entirely made up of earth elements.

"This thing is very powerful, but it's not an earth spirit..." Vaan muttered with a frown.

If the giant earthen entity were an earth spirit, it would have been possible for it to be a divine earth spirit.

However, higher-ranking spirits would have greater intelligence.

Vaan made several attempts to communicate with the giant earthen entity. Unfortunately, none of his words seemed to have reached it. He didn't get any responses other than its attacks.

As such, he couldn't classify it as a divine earth spirit. He could only call it a pure earth elemental worm without intelligence.

After all, if he died, the Stalactite Milk would be lost in his Heaven-Swallowing Space, drifting off in some subspace between the dimensions.

If communications were possible, he could have negotiated to return some or even all of the Stalactite Milk to the pure earth elemental worm.

However, since it was non-intelligent, all forms of negotiations were off the table.

'It's coming again!' Vaan's gaze sharpened.

Boom!

Once again, Vaan escaped the range of the pure earth elemental's attack, moments before it shattered the hard rocky ground and drilled back into the depths of the subterranean region.

No doubt, the pure earth elemental worm would come for him again.

Each of its movements was huge and shocking, causing enormous tremors throughout the expanding underground space.

It wasn't the kind of attention Vaan wanted to draw onto himself.

'I can't stay here,' Vaan's frown deepened.

Once he made up his mind, he immediately flew through the dimensional crack. He left Chaos and returned to the surface of the moon.

Even without looking back, Vaan knew the pure earth elemental worm was coming for him.

As such, he didn't linger on the surface of the moon. He quickly took off and ventured into the void of dark space, creating as much distance from the moon as possible.

In order to lose the pursuit, Vaan circled to the other side of the moon, where he would be out of sight once the pure earth elemental worm emerged from the dimensional crack.

After drawing a safe distance, Vaan observed the surface of the moon for changes.

Time passed, but they felt longer than usual.

Seconds felt like minutes.

Nevertheless, several dozen breaths soon passed without any changes on the surface of the moon. Alas, it didn't keep staying that way.

Several more breaths passed before the pure earth elemental worm emerged from the moon.

However, the pure earth elemental worm didn't go around the moon to find him. It directly drilled through the entire moon, from one end to the other, in order to reach him!

Rumble!

Right after the pure earth elemental worm fixed its maw of stalactite teeth in Vaan's direction, the entire region of space around the moon shook!

'Spacequake!' Vaan's pupils shrank into slits.

The pure earth elemental worm's silent roar could cause temblors in the moon's magnetic field and scatter it.

It was a different kind of spacequake compared to the ones generated by the explosions of azure energy during the clashes of asteroids.

There was no sound or anything that indicated the pure earth elemental worm roared at Vaan. And yet, he still had the feeling that it did.

More importantly, it was a roar without any sign of anger or emotions, for that matter.

Since the pure earth elemental worm lacked intelligence, it also had no feelings or expressions. It wasn't mad at Vaan or anything for stealing its Stalactite Milk. Or rather, the Stalactite Milk was irrelevant to it.

It just wanted to devour him.

The pure earth elemental worm was simply an inorganic existence that acted to hunt all other lifeforms on instinct!

It was a life destroyer!

'I can't bring this thing back to Pangea!'

Vaan decisively flew away from Pangea the moment he witnessed the pure earth elemental worm travel through the void in order to reach him.

It would be a catastrophe if no one could slay the pure earth elemental worm. And even if they could, it wouldn't happen without Pangea suffering devastation on a seismic scale first.

Nevertheless, it truly surprised Vaan that the pure earth elemental worm had a magnetic field, which it could manipulate for interstellar travel.

'I've truly stirred one hell of a hornet's nest this time,' Vaan thought.

As he used spatial shift and pyrokinetic thrust to venture deeper into the depths of space, further away from Pangea and closer to the asteroid field, he glanced back occasionally to check on the pure earth elemental worm.

Although the pure earth elemental worm was very powerful, it was fortunate that he was still faster than it.

However, it was too soon to increase their distance.

He had to drag the thing further away.

...

Sixteen hours later...

After Vaan traveled through 2,000,000 kilometers of void space, he encountered a small debris field of shattered asteroids. It didn't have any azure crystal deposits, but it was rich in minerals.

Although unfortunate, the large mineral deposits were still very useful for forging various items.

Nevertheless, he decided to make the debris field his standing ground. We would face the pure earth elemental worm there.

Throughout the entire trip, the pure earth elemental worm had chased him without giving up.

'You chased me for so long. I hope you are prepared to suffer for it,' Vaan conveyed to the pure earth elemental worm with earth spirit telepathy, knowing it might not understand.

Rumble!

The surrounding space trembled with spacequakes as the pure earth elemental worm responded with a silent roar.

'Is that your answer? So be it. Come! I will use you to test the extent of my power!' Vaan raised his battle spirit and appeared full of vigor.

Chapter 510: Earth Elemental (2)

There was a reason Vaan made the debris field his battleground. It had plenty of obstacles to hide him from the pure earth elemental worm, even if for a brief moment.

Furthermore, it was already sufficiently far from Pangea.

Although it seemed like Vaan planned to lure the pure earth elemental worm all the way into the vastly larger region of space, the asteroid field, it was already established that it was too far for him.

However, the most important factor was the unknown danger in the asteroid field.

Considering the pure earth elemental worm could generate spacequakes, there was no telling whether similar life-destroying existences were lurking in the depths of the asteroid field.

In fact, there was even a good chance that such existences caused a group of rogue asteroids to head toward Pangea.

Vaan couldn't help but suspect other planets once existed in the Pangea system, but they were all destroyed by the pure earth elemental worm and its kind, if it had any. And if it didn't, it would mean it alone reduced the planets to the current existing asteroid field.

Nevertheless, it was no wonder there was no other life in the dark underground space.

With such a powerful existence like the pure earth elemental worm guarding it, any demon that stumbled inside would have been killed.

Perhaps over such a long period of killing, the denizens of Chaos learned the horrors and kept their distance from the subterranean region.

Or it could be like Vaan previously guessed – the subterranean region was too deep and secluded for the denizens of Chaos to access and discover it.

Regardless of the possibilities, at the very least, Vaan was confident there was no other life in the dark underground space.

As long as he removed the threat posed by the pure earth elemental worm, the dark underground space would become a completely safe zone for cultivation.

He could also make it his secret outpost for when he needed to infiltrate Chaos and gather intel.

After all, as it stood, Pangea knew very little about the Gehenna and the seven Great Devils. The world only knew the seven Great Devils were Rank 6 divine beings, nothing more.

They knew nothing about the demons' numbers and the Great Devils' abilities, let alone the vastness of Gehenna and the divine rank.

Thus, even if Pangea had a divine-rank being, it may not be able to fend off the full force of Gehenna.

...

Boom!

The pure earth elemental worm lunged straight at Vaan again, only to miss. At the same time, several floating pieces of debris in its path were easily shattered into countless smaller fragments and hurled into the depths of space.

Right after the pure earth elemental worm missed its attack, its speed considerably slowed down as it turned its 100 km-long body around for a follow-up attack.

Although the pure earth elemental worm was extremely powerful due to its sheer size, its attacks were also simple and predictable.

From what Vaan could see from its past attack patterns, it was only capable of straightforward attacks.

It couldn't execute more complicated maneuvers such as feints.

Since it couldn't even perform feints, attack breaks, which required it to cancel and change the trajectory of its attack mid-action, were even more impossible for it.

Nevertheless, even simple attacks were difficult to evade if there were enough power and speed behind them. Without spatial shift, which allowed Vaan to leap more than five kilometers at once, it would have been difficult for him to evade such large attacks.

However, there was one glaring weakness to the pure earth elemental worm's attack.

'If I stick close to its long body, it'll never be able to reach me,' Vaan narrowed his eyes as he noticed the flaw.

Rumble...!

The surrounding space trembled with spacequakes as the pure earth elemental worm steered its head toward Vaan. Unlike before, the spacequakes weren't random but controlled; they clashed against each other and created a chaotic region of space.

As such, it became nearly impossible for ordinary spatial users to escape with spatial shift.

However, Vaan was not an ordinary spatial user. With his extraordinary perception and thought-processing speed, he easily found a clear route to spatial shift out of the chaotic region of space.

Alas, he didn't intend to escape this time.

'Trying to stop me from escaping by locking down space? Did it do it intuitively, or is it learning?' Vaan frowned.

It was the first sign of intelligence.

Was the pure earth elemental worm an earth spirit after all? Did it develop intelligence at a much slower rate due to the immensity of the body it was born with? Or did it never get the chance to develop its intelligence due to the solitude of its environment?

Various thoughts raced through Vaan's mind as he pondered over the new information.

However, the imminent threat didn't give him the luxury of time.

Swoosh!

Enormous flames discharged from the soles of Vaan's feet as he kicked at the empty space and achieved an instantaneous burst of speed. As the fire appeared at zero distance with his feet, they achieved minimal impact damage and maximum thrusting power.

When coupled with his Kinetic Energy Manipulation, which increased the kinetic movement of his pyrokinetic thrust in a near-vacuum space, Vaan's instantaneous speed accelerated to exponential heights.

In a short instant, Vaan flew out of the pure earth elemental worm's attack path and clung to the side of its rapidly-moving body.

Rumble...!

The surrounding space trembled with even more spacequakes as the pure earth elemental worm tried to shake Vaan off its body but to no avail.

It flew in spirals and curled up like a coiled serpent to reach Vaan.

Unfortunately, its body was so massive that it took several breaths before it finally steered its head toward Vaan's location.

'Oh?' Vaan smiled.

Just moments before the pure earth elemental worm struck, Vaan immediately fled with a spatial shift.

As a result, the pure earth elemental worm slammed into its own body; its pointed stalactite teeth directly penetrated its hard rocky scales and almost through to the other side.

Rumble...! Rumble...!

Constant spacequakes rippled through the debris field as the pure earth elemental worm writhed violently to free its head from its penetrated body.

At first, it seemed like the pure earth elemental worm was writhing in pain.

However, it did not have any pain receptors; it was purely inorganic and felt no pain whatsoever.

Its violent writhing was only an attempt to free itself.

Nevertheless, Vaan repeated the same tactics and clung to its body several times. Each time, the pure earth elemental worm would blindly drill into its own body with its tough stalactite teeth. Vaan was like an itchy spot that could not be scratched.

That said, the pure earth elemental worm didn't seem to take any substantial damage or feel any anger from its repeated failures to kill him.

Vaan had tried to feel it out for more signs of intelligence, but his attempts remained fruitless.

'Was it just my imagination?' Vaan frowned.

He had never come across an existence like the pure earth elemental worm. It was peculiar and unique. Thus, despite the danger, he couldn't help but study it. He wanted to learn more about its type of existence.

Boom!

Vaan finally retaliated with a fiery fist packed with the full destructive power of his Fire Law. The impact immediately shattered several hundreds of hard rocky scales.

However, the damage was still insignificant to the pure earth elemental worm's self-destructive attacks. Compared to its millions of earthen scales, losing a few tens of thousands was nothing, let alone several hundred.

Even so, Vaan wasn't finished; his attacks were fast and rapid.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Vaan barraged the pure earth elemental worm's 100 km-long body with countless fiery fist attacks, shattering hundreds of scales after hundreds of scales. Hundreds turned into thousands, and thousands turned into tens of thousands.

In a short time, Vaan shattered more than a hundred-thousand earthen scales like he was descaling a celestial fish.

Fragments of rocks and earth scattered across the debris field.

Individually, Vaan's Peak Demigod-rank attacks did little-to-no damage. But when stacked countlessly, even the damage would accumulate into something substantial.

Rumble...!

The region of space quivered once again from the pure earth elemental worm's silent cry before it had a change in its behavior.

It did not stubbornly chase after Vaan.

Instead, the pure earth elemental worm slithered through the debris field like a snake and devoured its shattered parts.

Even the minor asteroids in the debris field weren't spared.

Once it devoured sufficient earthly materials, the pure earth elemental worm grew out new scales and fully recovered its form.

The accumulated devastation to its body disappeared without a trace.

Everything went back to spare one.

However, Vaan didn't find the situation surprising. The pure earth elemental worm was comparable to a divine-rank being. Naturally, it wouldn't be easy to kill, not to mention he had no intention of killing it.

After all, it could produce at least 100,000-year Stalactite Milk.

It was simply priceless.

'Now, how should I deal with this thing? I can't keep consuming my mental energy here in the middle of nowhere,' Vaan mused thoughtfully.