

The Witch 511

Chapter 511: Evanore Hallewell

Although Vaan could achieve more incredible speed in deep space, he also lost the potential to use greater power.

After all, there was little-to-no resistance to affect his speed in near-vacuum space. Thus, he would stay in motion after using the initial momentum to travel. This was not even accounting for the acceleration factors to bolster his speed.

On the other hand, because it was also a near-vacuum space, there were basically no natural forces to strengthen the power of universal laws.

In other words, Vaan could only purely rely on the power of his comprehended laws and personal strengths and nothing else.

Given the present situation, Vaan had no effective means to defeat the pure earth elemental worm. This was the difference in their ranks. Vaan was too weak to compensate for the absolute gap in their strengths.

'I don't need to defeat it. I just need to lose it,' Vaan thought.

During the past several exchanges with the pure earth elemental worm, he noticed instances where the pure earth elemental worm's attacks were slightly more intense and swifter than others.

It just so happened that during those times, his aura was also more vigorous than usual.

Suddenly, Vaan thought of an improbable possibility.

Since the pure earth elemental worm only targeted Vaan on the basis that he was an organic living being and for no other reason, it would imply it could sense his vital energy. After all, it didn't have eyes and, therefore, couldn't possibly see him.

In other words, he just needed to hide his vital signs to become invisible and escape the pure earth elemental worm's life detection.

'I can do a lot with this information,' Vaan thought pleasantly.

So far, he might be the only person who realized such an important piece of information. If his enemies couldn't figure it out as well, they would have hell to pay.

Basically, the pure earth elemental worm could become a powerful fighting force for him – but only if used correctly. After all, it was no different to playing with fire.

In the process of burning his enemies, he could also risk burning himself.

Nevertheless, this wasn't the improbable possibility he thought of.

There was a chance the pure earth elemental worm was born with the instinct to devour life in order to achieve its spiritual evolution. In other words, it needed to consume other intelligent lifeforms to acquire spiritual intelligence.

Without completing its spiritual awakening, the pure earth elemental worm was just a powerful, mindless, moving mass of earth born to extinguish life.

But why was such a terrifying celestial existence born?

If the pure earth elemental worm was born with divine-rank strength right from the start, it could be said that heaven was fair for robbing it of its spiritual intelligence.

However, that also made it a natural calamity.

That said, Vaan couldn't help but think about the 'what if.'

If the pure earth elemental worm could complete its spiritual evolution, it would be no different from a Divine-rank Earth Spirit. And once it had its spiritual intelligence, it could grow to be even more powerful than a Divine-rank Earth Spirit.

Such a mighty existence could, without a doubt, play a key role in winning the war against Gehenna and the Seven Great Devils.

Suddenly, Vaan shook his head with a wry expression.

That was a lot of 'what ifs.'

'There should be differences between elemental spirits born on Pangea and those outside of it. Even if the pure earth elemental worm acquires spiritual intelligence, it might not necessarily be kind; it could even turn into a bigger calamity,' Vaan thought.

There was no need for him to be greedy. He had already gained a lot on this trip.

Just as Vaan suspected, once he withdrew all the aura back into his body and hid his vital signs, the pure earth elemental earth stopped pursuing him.

In fact, it stopped all movements completely. It simply floated lifelessly in the outer regions of the debris field.

For a moment, the possibility of the pure earth elemental worm being an unnatural creation bred for killing by a more mighty existence crossed his mind.

However, the thought vanished once he saw the pure earth elemental worm moving again.

It headed back in the direction of Pangea—or rather, the moon.

There was a high possibility that the pure earth elemental worm was returning to the underground space in Chaos to slumber in dormancy. Still, Vaan couldn't be certain.

Thus, he followed it in case he needed to attract its attention away from Pangea.

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Three days later

Black Rose Kingdom, Blackthorn City

Inside Henrietta's grand magic tower's great hall floor, Henrietta sat on her high throne.

In front of her, the newly appointed prime minister and a group of high-ranking matriarchs gathered around a battle map laid on a large, round marble table, discussing development plans and defense strategies.

The newly appointed prime minister was called Evanore Hallewell. She was a High Witch from the neutral faction and the ex-matriarch of the Hallewell Household.

She once published a book on management ideas on how to create a powerful kingdom – its name was called Hallewell's Ideal Kingdom.

While Henrietta was searching for the ideal candidate to be her prime minister, she recalled the book and re-read it to refresh her memory.

Much to her surprise, the management ideas recorded within Hallewell's book were similar to the notes she took from Vaan.

Unfortunately, such a knowledgeable book was never popularized. In fact, it almost faded into obscurity due to the suppression of the supremacist witch faction.

After all, Hallewell's book suggested the abolishment of male enslavement and equal rights and opportunity for all men.

Naturally, such suggestions were no different from the preaching of heresy to the ears of the supremacist witches. As such, it was also no surprise that they heavily criticized and suppressed Evanore Hallewell and her book until they almost disappeared from the public.

Evanore Hallewell was also forced to step down from the matriarch position in order to guarantee that the animosity she attracted didn't fall upon her family members.

However, that was all in the past.

Now that she had been specifically scouted and appointed as the kingdom's first prime minister, a position that was second only to Queen Henrietta and also represented her, the several ex-supremacist matriarchs attending the meeting no longer dared to direct their scorn and hate toward her.

At the very least, they wouldn't dare to do so openly.

After all, Evanore Hallewell didn't just represent Queen Henrietta; she also represented the ideals Lord Vahn wanted to introduce to the kingdom.

Thus, going against her was also the same as going against Lord Vahn, the one person they absolutely could not defy, lest they want to suffer or even die under the Oath of Magic.

"Prime Minister Hallewell, the three lines of defense had been completed and strengthened. Why have you summoned us back today?" the ex-supremacist matriarch, Samera Strain, asked.

Since all the attending ex-supremacist matriarchs were in charge of constructing and strengthening the defensive lines outside the city's northern wall, she suspected the new prime minister called them in today to nitpick details in their construction efforts.

However, no such intention could be seen in Evanore Hallewell's calm, peaceful expression.

"Yes, I am already aware of your efforts, and I thank you on behalf of the kingdom for that, Matriarch Strain," Evanore casually acknowledged before moving on to the main topic, "However, there have been some changes since last night."

"Based on the data submitted by the observation team this morning, the fluctuations in Gehenna's Gateway have become more unstable and dangerous. There is much concern during the weak fluctuation period. The issue is the peak fluctuation period."

"During the peak fluctuation period, the Gehenna's Gateway has become dangerous close to Blackthorn City. If Pangea experiences any more major spacequakes, there's a high possibility that

part of the city's northern parts will also be swallowed during the peak fluctuation period," Evanore stated gravely.

When everyone at the meeting heard this piece of information, they also couldn't help but wear a somber expression.

They all knew what the possibility entailed.

"As such, I've called everyone today to prepare for the worse possibility. Should Gehenna's Gateway reach our doorsteps, the threat we will have to face will be unlike anything before," Evanore added seriously.

"This..." Samera and the other ex-supremacist matriarchs suddenly felt ashamed of their thoughts.

Evanore had not tried to single out an ex-member of the supremacist witch faction and suppressed them with her authority for revenge. She only had concerns for the kingdom and Pangea as a whole that she wanted to address.

The new prime minister had a big heart and didn't seek petty gains.

Seated on her throne, Henrietta slightly nodded with acknowledgment. She had carefully observed Evanore in the past three days and grasped a slight understanding of the person's nature.

As such, she knew she had picked an excellent person to be the prime minister.

Although Evanore suffered to the point that much of her hair had turned grey from stress over the last several decades, it still could not hide her natural beauty and the sincerity of her heart that wished for the betterment of all humanity.

"I must confess; I am ashamed for thinking you called us here to find faults in our construction efforts. Please forgive me, Prime Minister Hallewell," Samera expressed with a guilty look.

"You don't need to mind this matter. Please, let us focus on the more important subject," Evanore implored, casually evading the sensitive topic.

Naturally, she couldn't forgive the supremacist witch faction for everything she suffered. Even so, she didn't intend to abuse her newfound authority for personal gain.

Chapter 512: Evanore Hallewell (2)

Evanore Hallewell did not accept the offer immediately when Henrietta wanted to appoint her as the prime minister. She just wanted to continue her research in seclusion, where no one could reject and devalue her work.

However, Henrietta could be persuasive and managed to convince her.

"Times have changed, Lady Hallewell. If you take this position, I guarantee no one from the supremacist witch faction will cause trouble for you again; they are already a thing of the past.

Also, instead of staying cooped up in this lightless bunker, writing theories that may never see the light of day, wouldn't you much rather take the chance to implement them and see the results?" – Henrietta had said.

Such words resonated deeply with Evanore.

As such, Evanore was thankful for the opportunity Henrietta had given her and wanted to live up to her expectations.

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Evanore Hallewell...

Seated on her throne, Henrietta observed the person's character and conduct discreetly.

Sometimes, she couldn't help but feel guilty when she glanced at the person's grey hair. There were only a few remaining strands of black hair left.

She neglected her fellow Darkans too much and should have cared for them better.

Like her, Evanore Hallewell was also a Darkan – people born with pure black hair, black eyes, and fair skin. Innately, they were good at learning and retaining a youthful appearance.

Even if they didn't use beauty products or maintain healthy lifestyles, Darkans in their 50s could still look like they were in their 30s. And if they did use beauty products and maintain healthy lifestyles, even Darkans in their 70s could look as young as those in their 30s.

Due to their innate long-retaining youth, the Darkans were known as one of the most beautiful ethnic groups among humans.

As such, even with her spectacles, light freckles, and mostly greyed hair, Evanore was still a fine beauty. Even though she wasn't among the most beautiful women in the kingdom, she had a unique charm due to her down-to-earth disposition.

Henrietta soft sighed as she recalled parts of history.

Eight hundred years ago, the Darkan Empire once ruled half the continent with its great population and revolutionary ironwork.

However, its overbearing ambition to dominate the entire continent forced Pangea's other nations to unite in resistance. Ultimately, the Darkan Empire fell to ruin after being defeated by Pangea's coalition army and its people scattered across the continent.

Nevertheless, even though the Darkan Empire was long gone, the Darkan's inherent talents wouldn't just disappear with it.

Darkans weren't better at learning because they were inherently smarter than other human ethnic groups. They were better at learning because they were innately curious about everything and had a desire for knowledge.

As such, they were also more willing to put more effort into learning than anyone else.

Of course, it was also just a common stereotype of the Darkan ethnic group. There were always exceptions among the Darkans that didn't possess such qualities. The same applied to other ethnic groups and their stereotypes.

However, Henrietta was certain Evanore possessed the Darkan's stereotypical traits. She had seen it herself in the person's secluded basement.

Over the last several decades, Evanore didn't just research kingdom management improvements; she also studied astrology and effective strategies to combat Gehenna.

As such, Henrietta knew Evanore was knowledgeable and suitable for her new position.

"Since you've considered the worse possibilities, what effective suggestions do you have, Prime Minister Hallewell?" Henrietta casually asked from her throne.

"I don't dare to claim they are effective, Your Majesty," Evanore humbly replied before continuing, "However, I do have a couple of suggestions worth considering."

"As it stands, our kingdom is no match for the forces of Gehenna. Once Gehenna's Gateway swallows our city, our only advantage, Pangea's world suppression, will be no more. The demons we would have to face will be much stronger."

"In my honest opinion, the best choice would be to abandon the city to retreat further south, away from Gehenna's Gateway. This will conserve our strength and buy us time to grow our forces for a more definitive win against Gehenna," Evanore stated.

Although she had more to say, she was quickly interrupted.

"Abandon the city to retreat? I can hardly call this a good suggestion, Prime Minister Evanore," an ex-supremacist matriarch objected.

"If we abandon Blackthorn City, we'll lose three hundred years of solid foundation. It will only weaken us and make it more difficult for us to defend against Gehenna's forces in the future."

"I believe we have to make a stand," the ex-supremacist matriarch suggested.

"I am aware of the disadvantages, Lady Chalice," Evanore calmly acknowledged before saying, "Still, losing the capital would still be better than complete annihilation. Of course, it would be ideal if we could move the entire city."

'What do you think, Master?' Henrietta inquired.

'Indeed, retreating would be the only option if we were forced to face threats like the Seven Great Devils,' Henrietta's master agreed before adding, "However, the Seven Great Devils would have been more proactive if they truly wanted to conquer this world.'

'The fact that they haven't suggests they have bigger problems in Gehenna preventing them from launching a full invasion on Pangea. Furthermore, the other side of Gehenna's Gateway is hidden in a ghost forest.'

'Thus, there's a good chance we won't be facing any of the Seven Great Devils in Gehenna as long as we don't try to draw attention with large destructive spells in our battles,' Henrietta's master guessed.

Henrietta nodded before directing her gaze at Evanore.

"Prime Minister Evanore, surely, retreating wasn't the only good suggestion you thought of," Henrietta suddenly mentioned before speaking hypothetically, "If we choose to stay and defend the city, what do you suggest we should do then?"

"Your Majesty, if we must stay, I still stand by my opinion; our kingdom alone won't stand a chance against Gehenna's forces," Evanore replied.

"However, it'll be a different story if Lord Vahn, the venerable dragons, and the Holy Knight Empire's forces could aid us. Even if our city enters Gehenna during the period of peak fluctuation, we will unlikely face any of the Seven Great Devils directly."

"As such, we only need to fend off the demons under their command until the peak fluctuation period ends and returns our city to Pangea's side," Evanore added.

Her words were similar to Henrietta's master – they both believed the Seven Great Devils wouldn't personally intervene if they could avoid it.

It was as if their movements were being watched by another force that could threaten them.

Nevertheless, Evanore wasn't finished speaking.

She noticed everyone preferred for them to stand their ground and defend the city should it enter Gehenna during Gehenna's Gateway's peak fluctuation period.

"Regardless of whether Blackthorn City falls into Gehenna during future peak fluctuation periods, it doesn't change that Gehenna's Gateway continues to expand with time. We are bound to face Gehenna head-on at some point."

"In that case, there are several things we can prepare ahead of time, regardless of the future situation," Evanore mentioned.

"Oh? Please enlighten us, Prime Minister Hallewell," Henrietta said with interest. This was what she truly wanted to hear from the start of the topic.

"Firstly, we need to set up a high-ranking omnidirectional magic barrier that can cover the entire city and turn it into a fortress," Evanore stated objectively.

Henrietta nodded approvingly.

Based on previous data, the longest peak fluctuation period could last as long as three hours. Thus, as long as the magic barrier can hold for such length, they wouldn't even need to send out their people to fight the demons directly.

"Secondly, we need Lord Vahn's help in raising more High Witches," Evanore added.

She heard thousands of Peak-stage Senior Witches had advanced to the High Witch rank for the sake of winning the war against the Holy Knight Empire.

The battalion of High Witches trained by Lord Vahn during that period was even more powerful than any army of Peak-stage Senior Witches.

High Witches had become the main fighting force of the kingdom.

Henrietta did not refute this.

However, she didn't have any control over Vaan. Thus, if he didn't want to help, they wouldn't be able to do anything about it. Still, she didn't see any reason why he would refuse either.

She could only wait until the person returned before asking to see.

"Go on," Henrietta gestured.

"Thirdly, we need to open our borders and grant free passages between our kingdom and the Holy Knight Empire to enable trade. There must be valuable resources and more advanced magic technology in Pangea that had not been accessible to us. If we can acquire them, our kingdom will be able to take a big leap forward," Evanore stated.

Henrietta nodded with subtle shock in her heart.

Evanore Hallewell had shut herself in her basement for years. And yet, she was long aware of other countries being more developed than their kingdom.

As expected of someone who had studied kingdom management for many years, Evanore understood the situation well.

The Black Rose Kingdom had fallen far behind other countries due to its poor management, resulting in stagnant development for years.

"Fourthly, the magic bomb—"

Evanore was interrupted when Astoria suddenly entered the great hall floor to search for Henrietta, which she quickly spotted on the throne.

"We need to talk," Astoria demanded.

Chapter 513: Henrietta's Squeal

"Leave us," Henrietta calmly dismissed everyone beside Astoria from the great hall floor with a wave of her hand.

Shortly after Evanore and the other matriarchs left, the brief silence made the atmosphere between Henrietta and Astoria seemingly tense.

However, it was broken by Henrietta's bright smile.

Henrietta quickly left her throne and welcomed Astoria with a big leaping hug, arms wide open. Her body swung around after catching Astoria, but the latter remained firm on the spot without shifting due to the additional weight on her body.

"Why did you come to see me, Astoria?" Henrietta asked obliviously.

"What do you mean why did I come to see you?" Astoria glanced at her speechlessly before replying, "Weren't you the one that wanted to see me? I received your letter."

"What is this important matter you wanted to talk to me about regarding Vaan?" Astoria asked shortly after.

She did not doubt Henrietta would try to harm Vaan.

The trust they built over three hundred years of friendship wasn't easily broken. Since Henrietta had given her promise, Astoria would naturally believe in her.

Even so, she still couldn't help but feel concerned. After all, Vaan had gone missing for three days.

"About this..."

Henrietta slowly filled Astoria in on the details of the events that occurred in the Black Rose Kingdom over the last three days, including the dangerous fluctuations in Gehenna's Gateway and Vaan's departure to investigate the spacequake.

"This..." Astoria felt astonished and helpless at the end of Henrietta's explanation.

Since Vaan had gone to investigate the spacequake, he had most likely left the world and ventured into the heavenly sea of stars. She could not leave the world like Vaan, let alone survive out there.

Thus, even if she wanted to look for Vaan, she could not.

Furthermore, she was aware the sea of stars was also infinitely vast. Perhaps not as vast as Chaos, but still boundless for mortals like them. As such, there was no telling what Vaan would face out there or when he would even return.

Since there was nothing she could do to change that, she decided not to dwell on it despite her concerns.

Instead, she should focus on what she could do.

At the very least, she could do everything in her power to protect what he left behind from the threats imposed upon them.

That was her responsibility!

"I see..." Astoria uttered solemnly before saying, "If Gehenna's Gateway swallows Blackthorn City and brings it to the other side, the threat the city will face will likely be even higher than during the Holy War."

"My coronation hasn't been held, so the amount of authority I hold in the Holy Knight Empire is unclear. As such, I don't know how many people will support me or how many troops I can rally to support the kingdom."

"However, you can be assured that the Imperial Legion will assist the kingdom during this crisis. I have their full allegiance. If I leave now with the dragons' help, I should be able to bring the Imperial Legion to reinforce the city in three hours at most," Astoria guaranteed with a serious look.

Traveling between the Black Rose Kingdom and Holy Knight Empire did not take much time with the dragons' spatial magic.

Most of the time consumed would be due to gathering the members of the Imperial Legion.

Nevertheless, Henrietta shook her head.

"You're taking this matter too seriously, Astoria," Henrietta tried to lighten the conversation with a smile before saying, "Actually, the situation is not as urgent as you think."

"While it is true that the city will face the inevitable threat of Gehenna due to the fluctuations in Gehenna's Gateway, that time has not arrived yet. The last spacequake was over two and a half days ago. So, as long as we don't experience any more spacequakes, the peak fluctuation period of Gehenna's Gateway will start to subside from now on."

"I actually called you over to speak about another matter..." Henrietta mentioned as she started to become fidgety and embarrassed. "I... want to marry Vaan!"

"...What?" Astoria responded dumbfoundedly, thinking she had heard wrong.

"With your permission, of course!" Henrietta quickly added to explain herself, but she felt even more embarrassed for saying it. Her face immediately flushed red.

Astoria quickly realized Henrietta wasn't joking.

However, she didn't expect her friend to drop such a sudden bomb on her. It was so out of the blue that she didn't know how to respond or where even to begin to make sense of it all.

"Y-You want to marry Vaan, Henrietta? Are you serious?" Astoria spouted with disbelief before she frowned with a colder tone. She also narrowed her eyes. "What the hell happened during your meeting? Did he seduce you? Or did you seduce him?"

"He seduced me? Hehe... no, it's not like... that—" Henrietta blushed shyly before she suddenly burst into a fit of anger and denial, "Argh! It's not like that, goddammit! Why am I acting like this?!"

The moment she thought of Vaan, her body reacted strangely again in a way that she wasn't used to.

Thus, Henrietta immediately resisted violently. She dropped to the ground and repeatedly banged her head on the floor to calm herself.

As Astoria witnessed the rare sight, her jaw dropped with amazement.

Seeing Henrietta in such a state of erratic behavior was beyond her imagination. She never thought she would see her friend so flustered over a person.

More importantly, it was also the first time she had seen Henrietta show any form of femininity, even if only briefly.

As such, even though she was upset when Henrietta brought up the matter at first, she also found it amusing to watch her in such distress.

Most likely, violence was the only way Henrietta knew how to react to such unfamiliar feelings swelling up inside of her.

They had both been single throughout their life. But unlike Henrietta, she had experienced numerous confessions from her admirers and pursuers. On the other hand, Henrietta never encountered a single one.

However, Astoria didn't find that surprising.

After all, the person held the highest power and authority in the kingdom. And she would always make a cold frown whenever she saw men. That was more than enough to discourage all the men from making a move.

Perhaps, many matriarchs in the kingdom mistakenly thought Henrietta hated men and also grew to despise them because of that, allowing the supremacist witch faction to become so unbalanced in power and influence.

And after three hundred years, it had become their way of life and the only life they knew how to live.

Nevertheless, Astoria didn't intend to blame Henrietta for that. She knew her friend was a victim. Everyone pinned their hopes and expectations on her before she was ready to meet them.

Returning to the main topic, Astoria figured it was not a bad idea if Henrietta joined Vaan's harem after she gave it some calm thought.

She knew she couldn't monopolize Vaan's heart for herself, and he would continue to have more women in the future.

Furthermore, there wasn't anyone she could say she was particularly close with among his current women. As such, she thought it would be nice to have at least one person on her side.

More importantly, she wanted to watch more of her friend's erratic behavior.

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After Henrietta calmed down, Astoria calmly pulled her up to her feet.

At the same time, Astoria saw Henrietta's disheveled look and wanted to chuckle. But she forced herself to appear calm about the situation.

"Pft—Ahem, you have my permission, Henrietta. No, I completely agree with your wish for marriage," Astoria seemingly voiced her agreement with full support and sincerity. "However, can you tell me why you want to?"

"From what I can see, I don't think you want to marry Vaan because you have fallen for him, at least not yet," Astoria mentioned.

Henrietta sighed with relief and gratification. She was thankful she had such a supportive friend.

"Of course, it's not a marriage out of love. It's just a formality for the sake of the kingdom. You should be aware of the current situation and understand why it is necessary," Henrietta stated before adding, "Beyond that, Vaan's physique is also very important to my cultivation."

"Important to your cultivation?"

Astoria paused in thought for a moment before her eyes flickered with enlightenment. She quickly realized why Henrietta's behavior would become erratic around Vaan.

"Oh, I see... So that's why. I understand now," Astoria nodded, having grasped the situation.

Since Vaan's fire affinity was so high, he was naturally attractive to lower-ranking fire spirits.

Although Henrietta wasn't a fire spirit, she also had a high fire affinity. Thus, her feelings were also affected in some way – Astoria thought.

"Do you really understand everything, Astoria? You won't hate me or anything, right?" Henrietta asked.

She held Astoria's hands and peered into her eyes more excitedly, feeling blessed. Not only was Astoria very supportive, but she was also very understanding!

"What are you two talking about?" A man's casual question suddenly entered both of their ears.

In that instant, the coolness and proximity of the man's breath sent a shiver down Henrietta's spine and caused all her hair to stand on end with goosebumps.

"Kyaaa!!"

Henrietta instantly squealed with surprise and fell back on her rear.

After she glanced up and saw it was Vaan, she immediately shuffled back several times before she pointed her shaking finger back at him with a look of accusation.

"Y-Y-You! How long have you been there?! Were you listening to us talk!?" Henrietta barked with a weakened tone.

"Kya?" Vaan blinked absentmindedly before he smiled with a soft chuckle, unaffected by Henrietta's threatening gaze. "You were saying something interesting. Let me hear it as well."

"Absolutely not!"

Chapter 514: Empyrean Scarletsea

Henrietta roared in objection, but her aura was so suppressed that it was no different from a kitten's soft meow. Vaan's appearance was too sudden, and she was not prepared to face him at all. Her heartbeat thumped loudly like drums, and her breathing became heavy.

'How much did he hear? No, why am I even bothered by this? Why can't I keep calm around this person?' Henrietta wondered, pursing her lips.

'I may have greatly underestimated your situation, Henrietta. I thought your inexperience with men was the cause of the disorder in your emotions. However, I have realized it is only one of multiple factors, and it's a minor at that,' Henrietta's master spoke.

'Master? What do you mean?' Henrietta asked.

'The problem lies in your fire affinity and understanding of its law. Your fire affinity is already high, but his fire affinity is even much higher than yours! This makes you naturally attracted to him, like how a fire spirit would seek a good host to contract,' Henrietta's master explained.

'But I'm not a fire spirit,' Henrietta frowned.

'No, you're not. And that's where the root of the problem lies; you're not a fire spirit, but you are like one. I am to blame for this,' Henrietta's master said with guilt.

'Because of my influence, you were exposed to the Fire Law early. However, the Fire Law you comprehended is based on my personal understanding of the Fire Law. It can't be said to be your own comprehension.'

"That's why, when you meet someone like Vaan, he can easily shake your heart with his presence and words. His personal comprehension of the Fire Law is incomparably firm,' Henrietta's master stated.

When Henrietta heard that, she couldn't help but feel greatly astonished.

'Are you saying Vaan's comprehension of the Fire Law is above yours, Master?' Henrietta asked.

'Above me? Of course, that's not possible,' Henrietta's master replied with disdain at her disciple's ignorant question.

'No matter how talented Vaan is, he is still someone with only half a foot into the divine way. On the other hand, I am someone who has been in the True Divinity Realm for eons. Naturally, his comprehension of the Fire Law cannot be compared to mine.'

'I am talking about the firmness of his belief in his fire law comprehension, my dear disciple. This is something you lack because you have not found your own path in the Fire Law. My Fire Law is only meant to serve as a reference in helping you understand and figure out your own path; it is only a guideline, not the answer.'

'The universal laws could have infinite interpretations. How we choose to understand them is up to us; our beliefs become our power. And the stronger the belief, the closer it is to becoming the truth. Since you don't have a personal interpretation of the Fire Law, you are easily swayed by others with stronger beliefs in theirs.'

'Have you understood?' Henrietta's master asked.

'Yes, Master,' Henrietta replied.

The universal laws didn't have a single true interpretation.

Anyone could have an answer to it. As such, it didn't matter. What truly mattered was the strength of the belief in it. If the person firmly believed their interpretation of the universal law was the absolute truth, the universal law would respond to them with equal power matching that belief.

However, the moment they doubt their belief in the universal law, their comprehension progress would come to a standstill, unable to advance further.

Since she was still searching for the truth in the Fire Law and had not formed her own belief, she was still safe from the consequences. But as a result, she was also easily swayed by other people's beliefs in their fire law comprehension.

'To think he already at that level...' Henrietta thought to herself.

Nevertheless, after a short moment, she shook the envious thoughts out of her mind. Jealousy was a self-destructive poison.

No matter how great Vaan's talent was, that was his gift. She should not be envious of others and focus on her own gift. If she kept comparing herself to others who were better than her, she would not be able to improve.

Her only enemy was herself.

On another topic, she had always been curious about her master's background and history.

According to her master, her master was one of the top powerhouses of her time. And yet, such a powerful person was reduced to a mere soul fragment, forced to wander through space and time until she found someone like her who could accommodate and nourish her broken soul.

What could have destroyed her master's divine body and shattered her soul?

Alas, whenever Henrietta asked this question, her master would always evade it. Her master would say it was too early for her to learn about it. The truth would only distract and interfere with her cultivation.

'Master, can you at least tell me your divine title?' Henrietta requested.

'Alright,' Henrietta's master eventually agreed after some thought. 'I will only mention it once, so remember it well; my divine title is Empyrean Scarletsea.'

Empyrean Scarletsea... An Empyrean God in the True Divinity Realm.

Her master wasn't boasting when she said she was one of the top powerhouses of her time. Even when her master was just a single soul fragment, one of many scattered across the chaosverse, she could still wield enough power from her law to slay everyone below the divine stage.

Henrietta clenched her fist, wondering when she could also be as powerful as her master.

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While Henrietta conversed with her master, Empyrean Scarletsea, Vaan's attention shifted to Astoria beside him.

"You're back," Astoria welcomed him with heartfelt relief.

"Un, I'm back," Vaan calmly nodded before his gaze sharpened. "You're aura has changed. But this dragon aura isn't from the Red Dragon Clan, is it?"

"No, it isn't," Astoria shook her head and said, "Actually, this was something I wanted to tell you about it."

Shortly after, Astoria recounted everything she learned about her ancestor, Pangea, the Blessed Golden Dragon Tribe, and the Golden Dragon Bloodline to Vaan. Even the origin of the Elderwatch family and the Imperial Legion was included.

Astoria did not hide any detail from Vaan.

She regarded him as someone she could completely trust with her life. Thus, he was someone should confide with about everything.

Nevertheless, after Vaan heard the whole story from Astoria, his eyes shone with enlightenment.

It was as if several missing pieces of the puzzle were finally put together, forming a complete image in his mind. This was related to another remarkable discovery he made on his way back from the moon.

When the pure earth elemental worm dug through from one end of the moon to the other end in order to pursue him, it also cleared a path straight to the moon's center.

It was inside the moon's center where Vaan made his remarkable discovery – The moon was not really a moon but a megastructure.

However, the great passage of time had left the megastructure in ruins and beyond recognition.

Vaan couldn't figure out what was the purpose of the megastructure—until Astoria provided the missing information that he needed, that is.

Chapter 515: Divine Disappearance

After Vaan put together Astoria's information, he figured out everything regarding Pangea and the moon megastructure.

Although there was also a chance that Astoria's information was inaccurate and made up, the puzzle pieces fit so well that he chose to believe it until proven wrong rather than deny its possibility.

After all, he had seen the Pangea continent from outer space – it indeed had some faint resemblance to a resting dragon.

The world of Pangea was a cage used to trap the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea, and the moon was a megastructure her enemies had built to monitor and enforce her captivity.

That was what Vaan had found inside the center of the moon.

It was the ruins of a large colony filled with mechanically-constructed buildings and devices that had been destroyed or damaged beyond recognition. Reparations were impossible, let alone restoring any functionality it had to understand its history and purpose.

Fortunately, it still left behind a few hints, which, coupled with Astoria's information, formed a complete picture for him.

Although Vaan didn't understand who Pangea's enemies were, he at least understood that they were no longer around.

The planet Pangea might have been a prison world once, but now, the entire Pangea system was no different from a graveyard. Whatever war waged in the distant past had destroyed everything. That was also why there was such a large asteroid field in the Pangea system.

Even Vaan couldn't blindly guess how many planets had been shattered by the war to create such a large asteroid field.

However, he understood two things confidently.

Firstly, the enemies that trapped the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea belonged to a much more advanced and powerful civilization. To the current nations of Pangea, such foes were no different from a civilization of gods.

Secondly, whatever destroyed such an advanced civilization was equally powerful or even stronger.

These were two main points he understood confidently. He could only infer and guess the rest.

For example, the unknown force that destroyed the advanced civilization was most likely related to the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea. Furthermore, the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea must have held an important status in the unknown civilization.

The captivity and death of the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea sparked a great war between the two great civilizations, which ended in mutual destruction and left behind a star system of ruins.

Of course, Vaan couldn't be certain about this part.

Thus, there was still a chance that one or even both sides still existed. But even if they did, they must have long retreated somewhere in the sea of stars, away from this region of death.

Was the pure earth elemental worm born from the ruins of the great war? – Vaan wondered.

Nevertheless, he quickly shook his head and pushed the thought to the back of his mind. He could only find answers after he discovered more clues and information about the distant past.

More importantly, he had another matter for finding Henrietta.

"Did you discover the source of the spacequakes, Vaan? Also, you didn't encounter any dangerous foes in the sea of stars, right?" Astoria suddenly asked, recalling Pangea was trapped to death by a mighty enemy.

"I did somewhat discover the source of the spacequakes, but I did not find anyone or anything powerful and dangerous enough to be the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea's enemies like you are thinking," Vaan answered.

"Whatever you think is out there, I can assure you they are no more. It's a dead region of space out there. I only found ruins of what once could have been an ancient super-civilization. As such, those enemies are most likely all gone."

"At the very least, they shouldn't be in this star system anymore," Vaan assumed.

"Is that true? The prison wardens are all gone? We can freely venture into the sea of stars?" Henrietta inquired with some excitement.

She had always been curious about her master's world and wanted to visit it one day if she had the means to.

"I can only say most likely at best, but yes. If you have the ability to free travel the stars and survive out there, then there shouldn't be anything to threaten you..." Vaan replied before adding after some thought, "Besides one."

"Besides one?" Henrietta asked, seemingly no longer affected by Vaan's presence.

However, her red cheeks spoke otherwise. Even so, she appeared to be doing much better than before around Vaan.

Perhaps it was because the topic was serious, and she was focused on it. Or it could be some other reason.

The answer would reveal itself with time.

"Yes, that's right," Vaan confirmed with a nod.

Shortly after, he retold the two beautiful ladies about his interesting yet dangerous encounter with the pure earth elemental worm.

"Such a thing exists?" Henrietta uttered with shock after she heard the complete description.

Just then, her master, Empyrean Scarletsea, voiced her lack of knowledge regarding such a strange, unknown existence.

Nevertheless, Henrietta seemed to have moved on—or rather avoided the previous subject of her marriage.

However, Vaan didn't intend to bring it back up.

He could already guess the purpose behind it and had nothing against it. There were only benefits and no disadvantages.

Thus, he could afford to wait until Henrietta was ready to open up to him and bring it back up at her own pace.

"Right, I would like to borrow your wisdom. I want you to look at something and tell me what it is ___"

Just as Vaan took out a small piece of azure crystal to offer in front of Henrietta, his hand suddenly froze. A frown immediately hung on his face.

All the azure energy inside the azure crystal had suddenly seeped out on its own and disappeared into the ground.

That did not happen before when he was still in outer space.

Meanwhile, Henrietta wasn't sure what she was shown, but her master suddenly had a huge reaction in her mind.

'That...! That was divine energy!' Empyrean Scarletsea exclaimed.

'Divine energy? Do you mean that kind of divine energy that could only be found in abundance at the center of the sea of stars or refined by a practitioner in the divine realm or higher, Master?' Henrietta quickly inquired, feeling breathless.

She understood what the divine energy's appearance entailed.

"It seems you know what it is," Vaan stated after he observed and read the changes in Henrietta's emotions.

Henrietta had no reason to deny it after receiving her master's approval.

Thus, she calmly admitted it.

"That's right," Henrietta nodded before mentioning with a frown, "But why did it all disappear into the ground? Could it be...?"

Chapter 516: Energy Cultivation

"Could it be a divine-rank energy-gathering formation?" Henrietta spouted seriously.

Vaan and Astoria were left a little speechless. They thought Henrietta was joking, but judging by her expression; it didn't seem that way.

Although Vaan strongly felt a divine-rank energy-gathering formation wasn't the cause for the energy's disappearance, Henrietta must have some basis for her assumption.

It was at least worth hearing her out before refuting her.

"Why do you think that?" Vaan calmly asked with a hint of interest.

"You may not know this, but spirit energy is a kind of source energy that should be present wherever there is life. Even if it only exists in scarce amounts, it at least exists. However, this world doesn't have a trace of it. That's why there must be an unknown cause for its absence," Henrietta explained.

"I've recently learned about that," Vaan acknowledged with a nod.

Henrietta's explanation helped him make sense of the familiar yet unfamiliar feeling he had felt when he first came in contact with the azure crystal's energy. It made sense why the azure crystal's energy felt like an essential part of life – that was because it was.

However, for some reason, all life on Pangea was robbed of this energy.

"Still, that doesn't explain why you immediately assume a divine-rank energy-gathering array is behind the energy's disappearance," Vaan mentioned.

"That's because I suspect we live in a prison world – a world that is either used to contain fugitives or rear living resources by a mighty figure or more advanced civilization."

Once Henrietta said that, Vaan gave Astoria a quick glance—only for the latter to shake her head.

'I haven't told Henrietta about the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea. You were the first to hear of it from me.'

'I see.'

No words were exchanged, but they immediately understood each other's message.

After receiving Astoria's confirmation, Vaan felt slightly impressed by Henrietta and the hidden soul supporting her. They could infer the world was a prison world based on so little information.

Vaan became even more interested in learning more about the hidden soul inside Henrietta. It must have belonged to quite an imposing past figure.

Nevertheless, he suppressed his curiosity and focused on the current topic at hand.

"So you believe the advanced civilization built a divine-rank energy-gathering array on Pangea to harvest its spirit energy? It does sound plausible," Vaan partially agreed before adding, "However, I would like to introduce another possibility."

"But before that, you should hear from Astoria," Vaan directed Henrietta's attention to the person beside him.

"Oh?" Henrietta uttered curiously while doing her best to remain calm.

Nevertheless, before long, Astoria repeated what she told Vaan to Henrietta, allowing the latter to also learn about the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea and the world's history.

"Do you still think a divine-rank energy-gathering array causes the energy's disappearance after hearing all that?" Vaan asked Henrietta shortly after.

However, Henrietta vaguely sensed the question was directed at her but at her master, who shared her body. Her long eyelashes quivered slightly under Vaan's seemingly casual but all-seeing gaze.

'What do you think, Master?' Henrietta asked.

'This information certainly opens up new possibilities,' Empyrean Scarletsea acknowledged before saying, 'If the entire Pangea continent is actually the body of a golden dragon, this golden dragon must have at least been a Divine Beast in the Divine Transformation Realm.'

'Divine Transformation Realm...' Henrietta's lips twitched.

Unlike mana, which was still relatively new to Pangea, the cultivation of the spirit and divine energy had been fully developed in her master's world.

There was a clear, systematic path to becoming stronger through the cultivation of the spirit and divine energy. They were developed over the course of countless eons of trials and errors.

Her master had once told her the order of the energy cultivation system.

There were five mortal realms of spirit energy cultivation and four divine realms of the greater divine energy cultivation.

The five mortal realms of spirit energy cultivation were Body Tempering Realm, Energy Condensation Realm, Revolving Core Realm, Heaven Ascension Realm, and Void Realm.

After completing the five mortal realms of spirit energy cultivation, spirit energy would be transformed into divine energy.

As such, the four divine realms of divine energy cultivation stood far above the five mortal realms of spirit energy cultivation.

These four divine realms of divine energy cultivation were called Divine Origin Realm, Divine Star Realm, Divine Transformation Realm, and finally, Divine King Realm.

Thus, if counted in the order from spirit to divine, a Divine Beast in the Divine Transformation Realm would be equivalent to a Rank 8 divine being!

However, what left Henrietta speechless was the fact that such a large behemoth of a creature was only Rank 8, while her master, Empyrean Scarletsea, was an Empyrean God in the True Divinity Realm.

This realm was even higher than the divine realm!

Henrietta couldn't even begin to imagine just how exactly powerful her master was at the peak of her power.

Still, she understood one thing from all this – she was extremely fortunate to receive tutelage from such a mighty figure!

Although the absence of spirit energy had stopped Henrietta from receiving Empyrean Scarletsea's full teachings on spirit cultivation, things were different now that there was a chance to obtain the stronger form of spirit energy – divine energy.

"Do you have any more of those divine energy crystals? Is it possible for you to exchange some of it with me?" Henrietta asked.

"Divine energy, huh? So that's what you call it," Vaan softly uttered before shaking his head. He demanded, "Answer my question first."

Although Vaan's demand sounded like an order and was rude, Henrietta was not offended. She was too excited and forgot to answer his question. Thus, she was the one who was rude first.

"I'm sorry, I was too excited just now," Henrietta first apologized before conveying her master's thoughts, "If the story is true, it's less likely that a divine-rank energy-gathering array is responsible for the divine energy's disappearance."

"Right, I didn't think it was likely either," Vaan calmly agreed.

"That's why I think the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea herself is responsible for the divine energy's disappearance. It's hard to believe that such a humongous existence would completely die just like that."

"Perhaps Pangea is gathering all this divine energy to revive herself," Vaan mentioned his guess.

However, Henrietta didn't seem to share the same thought.

"That... also seems unlikely."

Chapter 517: Henrietta's Offer

"Why not?" Vaan asked with knitted brows, seemingly unconvinced unless he heard a good reason from Henrietta.

"According to what I know, the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea is at least a Divine Beast at the Divine Transformation Realm in order to be this big," Henrietta mentioned.

"Although beings in the Divine Transformation Realm are as powerful as Rank 8 divine beings, they don't live as long. A being at the Divine Transformation Realm can only live around fifty-thousand years."

"How long do you think the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea had been trapped on this planet? Hundreds of thousands of years? Millions of years?" Henrietta asked rhetorically.

Nevertheless, she made her point.

Indeed, if the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea were only a Divine Beast in the Divine Transformation Realm, it would have died long ago. But that was only if the Ancestral Golden Dragon Pangea was in the Divine Transformation Realm.

"I understand your point," Vaan acknowledged before calmly mentioning, "However, you said Pangea was at least in the Divine Transformation Realm. In other words, there is still a chance that Pangea could have been even stronger than this so-called Divine Transformation Realm, right?"

"Furthermore, from what I can see, you only estimated Pangea's strength based on her body size. You didn't account for her soul, did you?" Vaan casually asked.

Henrietta was unable to refute Vaan's words.

Indeed, even if Pangea's physical body was dead, it wasn't necessarily the same for the soul. After all, the soul could live much longer than the body.

Furthermore, the mana from Gehenna was nourishing the world of Pangea.

Thus, if there was even a sliver of a chance that Pangea's soul was still alive after all these years, it was hard to guess how much her soul had recovered from all the nourishment.

"You're right," Henrietta acknowledged with a nod before admitting, "Since you pointed that out, it does seem more likely for Pangea's soul to be alive and responsible for the divine energy's disappearance."

"I should also point out that all life was born on Pangea's body. In a sense, we are all part of Pangea. As such, I also think it's reasonable to believe it's not difficult for Pangea to absorb all the divine energy for herself," Astoria inserted her opinion.

"That is also a valid point, Astoria," Henrietta acknowledged.

"But no matter what we think, we won't be able to confirm the truth just by standing here talking about it. We must reach the source and see for ourselves if we want to confirm it."

"However, that's something I would like to leave for another time," Henrietta stated.

Even if they started digging into the earth, it was hard to say how long it would take to locate where all the energy went.

After all, Pangea was so large.

And even if they did locate the source, what could they even do if it was truly Pangea's soul gathering all the energy?

Steal the energy back from Pangea's soul? It doesn't seem possible.

Help Pangea reawaken her soul and seek her help against Gehenna? Did they even have the ability to help such a mighty existence at their current level?

As such, Henrietta focused on the most realistic choice – becoming stronger.

"Anyway, you should be satisfied with my answer, right? Vaan? Can we talk about the divine energy crystal you acquired now?" Henrietta requested under her master's urging before asking, "Do you have any more of them?"

"I do have more of them," Vaan calmly admitted before asking with a thoughtful look, "But what will you do with such information?"

"An exchange. I wish to make an exchange with you, Vaan!" Henrietta stated before guaranteeing, "Whatever you want, I promise it'll be worth the trade!"

"Oh?" Vaan smiled with interest and said, "Even if I give you a divine energy crystal for something I want, how do you intend to use it before all the divine energy dissipates into the ground? Or rather, can you protect the divine energy before you even receive the divine energy crystal from me?"

"This..." Henrietta was immediately tongue-tied for an answer.

However, Empyrean Scarletsea shortly informed Henrietta how she could protect the divine energy from dissipating into the ground. They just had to leave the planet and escape the absorption range.

At Henrietta's level, she could indeed leave the world with some effort. But she wouldn't be able to survive in outer space for long.

Nevertheless, that was something she could figure out later.

"There shouldn't be a problem if we make the exchange in the sea of stars," Henrietta stated before carefully reading Vaan's expression, "However, that's something you already know, right?"

"That's true," Vaan openly admitted before smiling calmly. "Alright, I can agree to exchange the divine energy crystal with you—but only if you can offer something I need of equal value. Do you have something like that?"

"You must know this divine energy is very beneficial for my aura cultivation," Vaan added, putting additional pressure on Henrietta in hopes of getting the most value out of the exchange.

Henrietta took a deep breath to calm herself before weighing the options with a big frown.

'Offer to teach him the method to reach True Divinity in energy cultivation,' Empyrean Scarletsea instructed.

'T-The True Divinity-rank energy cultivation method, Master? Are you sure? Isn't that far more valuable than a few divine energy crystals?' Henrietta responded with shock due to her master's decisive decision.

If it were in the Divine Realm, people would never imagine anyone would make such an absurd exchange. After all, the value of a True Divinity-rank energy cultivation method was priceless.

'No matter how good a True Divinity-rank energy cultivation method is, it's useless if there is no spirit energy or divine energy to use for cultivation. Moreover, this man won't be satisfied with just some information about divine energy cultivation. We have to offer something of this level at least to show our sincerity,' Empyrean Scarletsea calmly explained.

There was also no need to hide her presence anymore. She was certain that Vaan and Astoria were already suspecting something from all the information Henrietta had revealed.

Furthermore, knowing the method to reach True Divinity was one thing, but actually reaching that realm was a completely different story.

'I understand,' Henrietta complied.

Shortly after, Henrietta took another deep breath to calm herself. Then, her eyes flickered with a determined look.

"I will offer information about the energy cultivation system and teach you the method to effectively use divine energy to reach True Divinity," Henrietta firmly stated.

Chapter 518: Great Calamity

After Henrietta made her offer, Vaan fell silent. He contemplated the value of her offer, but he couldn't accurately gauge its value due to his lack of knowledge.

Nevertheless, Henrietta quickly understood that even if she offered a True Divinity-rank energy cultivation method on behalf of her master, Vaan wouldn't recognize its value unless she made him understand the greatness of True Divinity first.

'He doesn't know what it means to be a True Divinity; it seems he isn't a Reincarnator from my world... How shocking,' Empyrean Scarletsea uttered.

She had strongly suspected Vaan's accomplishments were all thanks to his advantage as a past-life Reincarnator.

However, she realized that might not be the case. But if Vaan achieved everything with sheer talent alone, that would be truly unbelievable.

Even the primordial gods born at the beginning of time didn't have such heaven-defying talents for learning.

'Explain the realms of energy cultivation to him. Let him understand what it means to be a True Divinity in my world. Consider it a gift on our part. Furthermore, we have to expose my existence sooner rather than later if we want to gain his trust,' Empyrean Scarletsea instructed.

'Yes, Master,' Henrietta complied. It seemed her master had already made her decisive.

At the same time, her master surprisingly had the same thoughts as her.

They couldn't sell something valuable unless they made the other party understand how valuable it was.

"A True Divinity in my master's world is a being that stands at the peak. True Divinities are godly existences that can live as long as the sun and moon and dictate the life of countless starfields," Henrietta explained.

"Your master, you say?" Vaan raised an eyebrow, not expecting her to expose the hidden existence backing her so soon.

However, Henrietta was calm since her master had already permitted her to speak.

"That's right," Henrietta admitted with a nod before introducing her master, "My master, Empyrean Scarletsea, was once a revered Empyrean God in the True Divinity Realm. She had been sharing my body and guiding me on the path of cultivation since the appearance of Gehenna."

"Once? Empyrean Gods must not be all that great if they could still fall to such a state," Vaan casually commented.

However, under his casual look, he was intentionally provoking a reaction with such a remark.

"You...!" Henrietta felt angry by Vaan's remark on her master's behalf, but she quickly held it in.

Although Vaan's remark was rude, she had no words to refute it.

After all, even she did not know how someone as powerful as her master could have her physical body killed and her soul shattered into pieces.

But as a True Divinity, even though Empyrean Scarletsea's true soul was shattered, she wouldn't die. It would just be a split in her divine consciousness. As such, there was still a chance for her soul to be reformed entirely once her soul fragments were collected whole again.

That was what it meant to be a True Divinity – it was an existence that had touched upon the secret of the everlasting and became eternal.

'Let me talk to him,' Empyrean Scarletsea requested before mentioning, 'You're already at your limit.'

At that moment, Henrietta's legs were shaking from feeling weak in her knees. Just like her master had said, she was at her limit and barely hanging on.

Just because she realized the root of her problem around Vaan didn't mean she could easily overcome it.

She already did well not to have another episode of erratic behavior as she battled her own feelings.

'Yes, Master,' Henrietta complied.

Shortly after Empyrean Scarletsea took over Henrietta's body, the surrounding aura completely changed.

It became incomparably heavy and oppressive.

However, it only lasted a moment before the aura was drawn back inside Henrietta's body. But as a result, several strands of her hair turned scarlet red, and the center of her pupils lit up with a crimson glow.

Although Empyrean Scarletsea wanted to minimize the side effects of her possession by keeping a tight leash on her power, it still strained Henrietta's body to some degree.

Considering Henrietta's soul was also put into a state of unconsciousness after the switch, her body also adopted some of Empyrean Scarletsea's unique traits.

Her dark purple eyeshadow and black lips also turned red, in addition to the changes to her hair and pupils.

The entire vibe Empyrean Scarletsea gave off was completely different to Henrietta. As such, Vaan's expression turned solemn.

"I don't have a lot of time. So, let us talk quickly. And if possible, alone," Empyrean Scarletsea informed.

Vaan nodded seriously and gave Astoria a glance before she took it as her cue to leave.

Although Astoria had a lot of questions on her mind after everything that unfolded, she knew she could only ask the two people later.

Nevertheless, once Astoria left the great hall floor, Empyrean Scarletsea began her round of questioning.

"How much do you know about the Divine Realm and the power differences in that place?"

"..." Vaan furrowed his brows.

"It seems you truly know nothing. I apologize for assuming." Empyrean Scarletsea once again confirmed Vaan wasn't a Reincarnator from the Divine Realm before she said, "Just as you said before, True Divinities aren't all that powerful."

"At the very least, before the Great Calamity struck us, Empyrean Gods like me, who were at the peak of the True Divinity Realm, truly once believed we were invincible. After all, we were the strongest beings to rule the vast sea of stars."

"But as the saying goes – there is always someone stronger. I just didn't think such a saying would still apply to us, Empyrean Gods. We were completely helpless against these unknown beings that suddenly appeared," Empyrean Scarletsea sighed.

"Great Calamity, huh? In other words, your world got invaded by more powerful beings from the outside. I take it that these unknown beings came from Chaos?" Vaan guessed.

However, Empyrean Scarletsea shook her head.

"You certainly catch on quickly," Empyrean Scarletsea briefly praised before saying, "You are right to guess they came from outside our chaosverse. However, I cannot confirm whether they came from Chaos."

"Are you implying they could come from somewhere other than place Chaos and our chaosverse?" Vaan frowned.

If that were true, where could such a place be?

He was told that only an endless sea of nothingness lay beyond the boundary.

Chapter 519: Empyrean Scarletsea's Expectation

"I don't know," Empyrean Scarletsea shook her head and said, "I have never encountered such strange yet seemingly almighty existences before. That's why I cannot confirm whether they come from Chaos."

How could she confirm whether the unknown beings, which invaded the Divine Realm, came from Chaos when she didn't even know what existed in Chaos?

"All I can tell you is none of our powers and laws worked against them. Neither the energy we cultivated nor the universal laws we comprehended produced any effect. The unknown invaders nullified all of our attacks effortlessly no matter what we threw at them," Empyrean Scarletsea stated with a helpless look.

For a once mighty Empyrean God to make such a helpless expression, the person must have been truly powerless during the Great Calamity.

"They wield the Law of Nihility?" Vaan casually guessed.

However, Empyrean Scarletsea shook her head with a bitter smile.

"If only it were that simple," Empyrean Scarletsea sighed, acknowledging, "The Law of Nihility is indeed impressive and extremely rare. Perhaps only one person in the whole chaosverse would ever comprehend it."

"However, what those unknown invaders used to nullify out attacks didn't feel like the Law of Nihility but was still equally impressive in its effectiveness. It was as if they had completely read through our attacks and reversed their processes, rendering them useless. Or perhaps they were using some unknown law that is beyond our understanding."

"All I can say is we were completely outmatched and overpowered. To make us, Peak-stage Empyrean Gods, feel utterly powerless, I can only believe these unknown invaders have achieved a realm of power even beyond the True Divinity Realm," Empyrean Scarletsea guessed.

No one in her era had ever advanced past the Peak stage of Empyrean God. Thus, the legendary Beyond True Divinity Realm was only an illusion they could dream about.

However, the appearance of those unknown invaders made them start to believe such a realm truly existed.

"Why did they invade the... Divine Realm? What did they want?" Vaan asked with a frown.

"That's the problem," Empyrean Scarletsea replied with a deeper frown.

"No one knows the answer to that question, not even the other Empyrean Gods and I. They just suddenly appeared out of a dimensional rift and started killing everyone. Even the celestial bodies weren't spared."

"Before their appearance, no one had ever seen existences like them. Their forms were unclear and ever-changing but always radiating with rainbow light. Such a unique life form would have been recorded if they had ever appeared in the past."

"However, they haven't. It's impossible for any grudge to form prior to their appearance. As such, I cannot understand why they would try to destroy everything as soon as they appeared. They even seemed intellectually capable," Empyrean Scarletsea added.

"Well then, why are you telling me all of this?" Vaan suddenly wanted to understand.

"Because I figured if it's you, you might have a greater chance at reaching such a realm of power than my disciple, Henrietta. Although she is talented, she is still lacking. Such news would weigh down on her heavily and affect her cultivation," Empyrean Scarletsea coolly stated.

"On the other hand, you are different. I have heard and seen what you have done, Vaan Raphna. You have grown very fast and reached a level of power that many could only describe as unthinkable for a man, given the unfavorable conditions this world has for men."

"Furthermore, the speed of your law comprehension and control of the universal law puts even someone like me to shame. I have never seen a more talented person than you in my entire history of life."

"It's like the heavens had used all of its last remaining powers to create a heaven-defying talent for you and leave behind a seed of hope – hope that one day you can stop—"

"Stop." Vaan interrupted Empyrean Scarletsea with a hand gesture and indifferently said, "I don't care about becoming a hero or savior of the entire chaosverse, so don't try to put me on a pedestal in hopes of making me one."

"My life is more important," Vaan firmly stated.

He wasn't even a Rank 6 divine being yet.

It was utterly ridiculous to assume he would have a chance to reach such a distant realm of power, no matter how talented he was. Even if he had confidence in his talent, he still lacked the knowledge to reach it.

As such, to assume it was possible for him would no longer be confidence but sheer arrogance.

Nevertheless, Empyrean Scarletsea wasn't disheartened by Vaan's response. She kept a calm look and even smiled.

"I understand that," Empyrean Scarletsea acknowledged before saying, "I just wanted you to be aware of the current dangers in the seemingly vast sea of stars, lest you blindly venture out there and get yourself killed by such beings."

"At the same time, I also wanted to earn your goodwill by helping you become strong faster. I believe you aren't one to repay gratitude with enmity. Also, I didn't expect you to be able to do anything about this chaosverse's situation with your current strength. You are still far too weak."

"Even so, it also doesn't hurt to leave behind a seed of hope and have some expectations for the future. I just want you to understand that," Empyrean Scarletsea expressed her sincere thoughts.

"Note taken," Vaan acknowledged.

"Alright then, shall we return the discussion about our offers in exchange for one of your divine energy crystals?" Empyrean Scarletsea suggested. Without waiting for Vaan's response, she continued, "I don't think you understand the value of a True Divinity-rank energy cultivation method. So, I will explain that first."

"No need. I agree," Vaan straightforwardly agreed to the exchange, somewhat surprising Empyrean Scarletsea. "I have received enough of your goodwill. It would be wrong of me not to return the favor."

"I trust you won't go back on your words after the exchange," Vaan calmly added with a charming smile.

"Oh my..."

Chapter 520: Breaking Sky Barrier's Requirement

Empyrean Scarletsea was pleasantly surprised by Vaan's straightforward answer. It seemed her sincerity had reached him.

Nevertheless, she had to admit that among men she had seen within Pangea through the eyes of her disciple, Vaan's handsomeness could be ranked at the top. He had both the looks and talents – a truly gifted son of heaven.

His charming smile could melt the hearts of innocent young maidens.

"Kukuku, if I were sixty billion years younger, my heart would have skipped a beat for you," Empyrean Scarletsea cracked a joke due to her pleasant mood.

However, Vaan didn't find it funny. Rather, the joke caused his smile to vanish.

Sixty billion years...!

Fuck, even his earliest ancestor wasn't a sperm cell when Empyrean Scarlet was still in the prime of her youth.

Behind the pretty young appearance of Henrietta hid a truly ancient granny of primordial times.

The corners of Vaan's eyes slightly twitched.

"It fell flat, huh?" Empyrean Scarletsea muttered to herself, having noticed her joke didn't produce the intended result. "Back in my era, this joke was quite well received among my people, especially after I delivered the punchline."

"...What was the punchline?" Vaan couldn't help but ask, even when he knew it was unlikely any punchline could save such a dry joke.

"Why aren't you laughing?" Empyrean Scarletsea simply answered with a straight face.

"..."

Vaan was struck speechless.

Could that even be considered a joke? It was more like a threat. The whole joke in and of itself didn't have to be a joke. People would still laugh because they fear for their life.

Evidently, Empyrean Scarletsea didn't have a sense of humor.

However, Empyrean Scarletsea didn't need any talent to be a comedian. In fact, anyone could become a comedian as long as they had absolute strength.

'This must be the highest realm a comedian could achieve... to make people laugh without saying anything funny,' Vaan thought humorously with satire.

Nevertheless, Empyrean Scarletsea shortly put an end to the topic as she was running out of time.

"Alright, enough of that. My disciple will explain the True Divinity-rank energy cultivation method to you after the exchange," Empyrean Scarletsea stated.

"Then, let us meet in the void beyond the sky of Pangea," Vaan suggested.

Shortly after Empyrean Scarletsea agreed, she returned control of the body back to her disciple. Henrietta regained consciousness the moment her body control was returned.

However, she felt no strength in her legs and started to drop to the ground—only to be caught by Vaan. The close proximity immediately made Henrietta's face flush bright red as her heartbeat raced like beating drums.

Her mind immediately spun with confusion. She had yet to process the whole situation and was expecting her master to fill her in on the details of their talk.

At the same time, Henrietta subconsciously shoved Vaan away with both hands. As a result, she fell flat on her rear with a soft thud.

Although Vaan offered a hand to help her up, Henrietta rejected it with a shake of her head. She quickly told him to head to the rendezvous location first.

"Alright," Vaan calmly agreed.

Shortly after he left, Henrietta remained seated on the ground with an absent look.

She had not been mentally prepared for such close contact with Vaan. And yet, for some reason, the moment lingered in her mind. The thought of Vaan couldn't be cleared out of her head.

Henrietta glanced at her two hands, which still had the feeling of touching Vaan's well-defined chest. There was even a unique, pleasant scent on them.

Subconsciously, she couldn't help but bring her two hands closer for a better sniff.

"What are you doing?"

Astoria's distant voice suddenly entered Henrietta's ears. Henrietta's blood pressure spiked through the roof in that instant. She jumped with fright like a frightened kitten that had just been caught doing something bad.

She almost had a heart attack.

"N-Nothing!" Henrietta stuttered while trying to hide her embarrassment.

After quickly cooling her head, she really wanted to smack her own head. What was she even thinking? Why did she want to sniff a man's scent?

Since when did she become so perverted?

"Aren't you leaving yet, Henrietta?"

"I-I'm leaving now, Astoria!"

Shortly after hearing Astoria's urging question, Henrietta quickly fixed her embarrassed expression and scurried off.

Before long, Astoria watched Henrietta from the balcony of the great hall floor as the latter ascended through the sky with a blazing trail of fire behind her.

'Transcendent...' Astoria glanced at Henrietta's departing figure with some envy.

She didn't envy Henrietta as a person; she only envied her capability to leave the world.

If she were a Transcendent Witch, she could also break past the sky barrier and enter the sea of stars...

No, that's not right.

Even a normal Transcendent Witch wouldn't be able to break past the sky barrier and enter the sea of stars due to the sheer amount of magic power required for the attempt.

As Astoria observed Henrietta's flight, she realized why not just anyone could break past the sky barrier.

Being able to fly was far from enough.

To break past the sky barrier, a person must have enough explosive speed and magic power to achieve escape velocity and maintain it until orbit.

Otherwise, Pangea's gravity would just pull them back and stop them from leaving.

That's why Henrietta was discharging her magic power at full throttle in order to break past the sky barrier in the shortest time possible. If she did not do so, the amount of mana she had to burn would increase exponentially.

Even normal Transcendent Witches could not discharge their magic power at full throttle for long extended periods, no matter how great their mana reserve was.

The mana expenditure of channeling spells was not the same as single-instant spells.

'The only reason Henrietta can enter the sea of stars like Vaan is because she has comprehended the Fire Law...' Astoria understood.

The expenditure of soul power using the Fire Law was far more efficient than mana consumption for fire spells of the same effect.

In that case, what Astoria needed to do was comprehend a law of her own.

Given her talents in mana cultivation, she had no hope of perceiving the universal laws before the Transcendent Rank.

But what about her Golden Dragon Bloodline?

Could she do something with it?