

The Witch 581

Chapter 581: Vaan's Vow

Vaan raised an eyebrow when Empyrean Scarletsea skipped the exchange of vows in the marriage ceremony process.

But then again, it was a marriage out of convenience instead of love.

Thus, he could understand why Empyrean Scarletsea would skip it. But at the same time, it also seemed like Empyrean Scarletsea wasn't familiar with the traditional marriage ceremonies of mortals. Rather, she appeared to be officiating the ceremony according to her own way.

"Is Henrietta watching all of this?" Vaan asked.

"She is," Empyrean Scarletsea nodded, explaining, "Our six senses are shared in this body. She hears and sees you perfectly, even if I am the one currently in control. She is feeling shy again, if I might add."

"Is that right?" Vaan uttered casually.

Suddenly, he took a step forward and held Empyrean Scarletsea's hands, prompting their eyes to meet. However, he didn't shy away and looked into her eyes directly, as if he was trying to see through Henrietta instead of Empyrean Scarletsea.

"What are you doing?"

Vaan's actions naturally took aback Empyrean Scarletsea.

However, Vaan didn't answer Empyrean Scarletsea's question. He continued holding her hands and gazing into her eyes with solemnity.

"I, Vaan Raphna, take you, Henrietta Rosegarden, to be my wedded wife. I promise to stand by your side through good and bad times, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. I vow to love you, care for you, and celebrate you from this day until my last."

"If you find yourself in the abyss of darkness, I promise to be the light at the other side of the tunnel waiting to pull you out. Even if you find the whole world against you one day, I will be by your side in the face of this adversary."

"So, my answer to your previous question, Emyprean Scarletsea, is I do," Vaan stated decisively, biting his right thumb until it bled before pressing his hand against the floating magic circle.

Both Henrietta and Emyprean Scarletsea appeared rooted on the spot as the body's heart skipped a beat, surprised by Vaan's vow.

However, it was unclear whether it was Henrietta's heart or Emyprean Scarletsea's that did.

Nevertheless, although Vaan's vow wouldn't have any contract power, the manner in which he spouted those words seemed like he was completely serious.

As such, both Henrietta and Emyprean Scarletsea were moved by them.

'This fella... He doesn't even know the weight behind his words...' Emyprean Scarletsea thought to herself with amusement.

Since her disciple was born with the Seven-Petal Void Soul, she was bound to be targeted by mighty beings if her secret ever got out. After all, the Seven-Petal Void Soul was incredibly powerful and rare, not to mention it could be inherited.

A peerless genius with the Seven-Petal Void Soul was once born in the Divine Realm. The spread of the news caused an absolute bloodbath between divine beings throughout the Divine Realm. In the end, the peerless genius died tragically after a True God refined her Seven-Petal Void Soul.

In other words, the Seven-Petal Void Soul was special enough to even tempt undying existences in the True Divinity Realm.

Emyprean Scarletsea wondered whether Vaan would still stand true to his words if he knew about it.

Meanwhile, Henrietta gazed at Vaan's figure through the windows of her eyes with a sense of doubt and softness.

They had only met a few times and spoken very little. She couldn't even hold a proper conversation with him without acting out. She wasn't the most beautiful nor the most elegant. In fact, she was weird and awkward.

As such, she couldn't understand why Vaan was willing to go so far for her.

However, she wanted to believe in them even if they were lies. She also longed to be loved by someone with this kind of intensity.

Henrietta was suddenly reminded of her loneliness and solitude.

She was also a curious creature.

Seeing countless couples walking down the streets of the capital, hand in hand, and acting lovey-dovey throughout the years, even she would feel curious and wish to experience the relationship between man and woman for herself.

However, she had to suppress her feelings and curiosity due to her master's strict words regarding the disadvantages of love.

Now that her master allowed her to marry a man and even perform dual practice with the person, could she be a little more selfish?

Perhaps if she was with Vaan, she could experience and understand the true meaning of love.

...

"Ahem!" Empyrean Scarletsea coughed, having recovered from her surprise before resuming her officiating the ceremony.

"Do you, Henrietta Rosegarden, take this man, Vaan Raphna, to be your wedded husband? – To share the good and bad times together, to care for, never betray, and never harm one another?" Empyrean Scarletsea asked her disciple aloud, adding the terms to the contract spell.

It was identical to Vaan's – equally binding, with no single party holding any advantages over the other.

It was a far contract.

"Master can only help you up until this point. You have to complete the ceremony and spell on your own," Empyrean Scarletsea said to her disciple.

Shortly after, Empyrean Scarletsea's grand aura disappeared through Henrietta's body as the latter regained control.

Surprisingly, Henrietta didn't shy away from Vaan. Despite the nervousness in her heart, she glanced up and met Vaan's eyes with steely determination.

"I do," Henrietta answered.

Following her answer, she bit her thumb until it bled before pressing her hand on the other half of the magic circle.

In that instant, the blood essences from the two parties were sucked into the magic circle, merging together in the middle.

The magic circle's glowing blue light intensified before turning crimson red.

Afterward, the magic circle split into two halves, each disappearing into their respective hands. It left behind a runic mark of two interlocking rings on each of their palms.

Some heat could be felt from the runic marks with a subtle tugging force, pointing them in a particular direction.

Vaan and Henrietta both followed their guided direction before their eyes met.

The runic marks allowed them to sense each other's location.

From that day forward, they were bound to each other as husband and wife by the spell.

Chapter 582: Start of Dual Practice

Henrietta and Vaan's gaze met for a short moment before Henrietta found herself staring at Vaan's handsome absent-mindedly. A few moments later, her mind snapped back, and her heart palpitated nervously.

She immediately averted her gaze, blushing shyly.

"My master told me this contract spell was commonly used to signify the union of two people in the Divine Realm. This runic mark is a symbol of their promise to spend a lifetime together. It's not always used for marriage, but it is still commonly used for it among divine practitioners."

"Apparently, this contract spell was developed by a Divine Dominator, who had experienced the heartbreak of betrayal by her loved one. The Divine Dominator poured her heart and soul into perfecting this spell to ensure one's significant other would never turn their back on them and stab them from behind."

"Ultimately, the Divine Dominator comprehended a great law through this ordeal and made a breakthrough to the True Divinity Realm, becoming the Goddess of Promise. When the Goddess of Promise casts the spell, no one beneath a Rank 11 True God can break it."

"Can you guess what the spell's name is?" Henrietta asked shortly after explaining the history behind the contract spell, squeezing her chest with one hand as if to calm her palpitating heartbeat.

"Hmm..."

Vaan hummed with a slight smile, shortening the small distance between them with a step before holding his newly-wedded wife by the waist and pulling her into his embrace.

With Henrietta's heart leaning against Vaan's chest, his calm, beating heart was meant to soothe her uneasiness by allowing her heart to match his steady rhythm. But instead, her heart rate increased along with her brightening shy blush.

"Is it the Forget Me Not Spell?" Vaan casually guessed, not taking the question seriously. After all, he had limited information and had no way of knowing the name.

However, to his surprise, Henrietta suddenly pushed her hands against his chest, drawing distance between them to look up at him with astonishment.

"How did you know?" Henrietta asked with amazement.

No matter how wise Vaan was, the probability of him knowing the name of the contract spell from her master's Divine Realm was almost non-existent, given the limited knowledge she provided.

"Lucky guess?" Vaan replied with interest, having not anticipated such a coincidence.

But after a moment, his gaze flickered with doubt as he thought to himself whether it was truly a coincidence that he could guess the name correctly in one go.

There had been more and more bizarre and unexplainable incidents happening to and around him.

Nevertheless, he could only shake his head and put those matters aside, focusing on the important task at hand. They weren't matters that could be figured out from just pondering on the spot.

"Isn't that way too coincidental—Mmph...!"

Henrietta didn't finish talking when Vaan pulled her back towards him and forced his lips on hers, silencing her as he stole another kiss from her.

However, Vaan didn't end it with a simple lip-to-lip kiss. He slipped his greedy tongue through the slight crevice between Henrietta's lips and ravaged the timid and clueless red snake dwelling inside.

In that instant, several bolts of electrifying shock ran through Henrietta's body, leaving behind multiple tingling points.

The pleasant sensation quickly enamored her.

When their lips separated, a dreamy look could be found on Henrietta's face. She was still savoring the wondrous feeling of a real kiss.

However, Vaan's following suggestion immediately brought her back to reality.

"Shall we dual-practice?"

"I..."

The faint blush on Henrietta's cheeks suddenly turned bright red. Her heart started pounding with anxiety, and her body temperature swiftly rose.

She made several attempts to meet Vaan's eyes but averted her gaze each time. At that same time, her heart would pound harder with greater anxiety, nervousness, and shyness.

"Dammit!" Henrietta cursed while clutching her chest.

Poof!

Henrietta couldn't cope with the situation and fled inside her mind, letting her master regain control of her body.

"My disciple is still shy around you. I hope you can be patient with her and interact more; give her time to adapt," Empyrean Scarletsea started before saying, "As mentioned before, I'll be your dual-practice partner in her stead."

"She will watch us and learn," Empyrean Scarletsea added.

"Alright," Vaan nodded.

He studied Henrietta's facial features while Empyrean Scarletsea was in control and noticed the subsiding blush on her cheeks.

Since Empyrean Scarletsea and Henrietta shared the same body, including all their senses, Vaan doubted Empyrean Scarletsea was immune to the attraction of their fire affinity compatibility. Even so, Empyrean Scarletsea was still able to interact with him normally.

From this fact alone, it was clear that Emphyrean Scarletsea's mental fortitude was powerful enough to resist the body's carnal desires.

Vaan expected no less from a primordial, undying being who had lived an incredibly as long as the stars and reached the peak of power in her so-called Divine Realm.

Nevertheless, Vaan didn't believe that he couldn't break her calmness with the Heavenly Massage.

After all, the Heavenly Massage could be said to be a technique that transcended everything he had learned on his life journey so far. Its level of detail and demand for mastery made it something not just any human could master, let alone create it.

Lord Manfred might have given the manual to him to learn it, but Vaan was certain he was not the inventor of the technique; he had only found it by chance.

The real inventor behind the Heavenly Massage had to be an incredibly powerful dual cultivator with in-depth knowledge of the art of healing.

Of course, the being must have been extremely perverted as well.

It was said that there were only five levels of pleasure, but there was no actual limit to the pleasure force one could feel. Everyone's five levels of pleasure were different, and they could change according to a person's individual growth in resistance to the pleasure force.

For example, suppose the pleasure force was converted into numerical values matching the world's power system. In that case, Vaan had only been using around 250 – 550 units of pleasure force to allow most of his partners to experience the third level of pleasure.

However, the same amount of pleasure force might only achieve the second or even the first level of pleasure on a higher-level being.

Vaan could easily make his partners experience far more than 1,200 units of pleasure force if he wanted to.

However, due to the consequences, he had never attempted such a feat on anyone besides Aeliana and Eniwse during their abomination state. After all, he had no reason to break the minds of his partners, and it was far too benevolent and merciful if he gave his enemies such an experience.

Although Vaan was curious how much pleasure force was needed to break Empyrean Scarletsea's calmness, he didn't intend to find out.

Henrietta wouldn't be able to bear it.

...

Shortly after Empyrean Scarletsea and Vaan moved to the room's large, soft, white bed, he removed Henrietta's black dress and got to work.

At the same time, Empyrean Scarletsea revealed a slightly unsettled expression.

However, it quickly vanished.

As such, Vaan continued with his art of pleasure. He started by teasing the two small white rabbits with his hands as he massaged them.

His dexterous hands didn't just amplify sensitivity to pleasure but also improved blood flow, increasing the body's likeliness to sweat and expel impurities and toxins trapped in the pores.

The Heavenly Massage offered various health benefits. It was originally a medical technique – altered for perverted means.

However, in the present world, dual practice shouldn't be frowned upon for depravity, nor was it a choice; it was a necessity.

"Mmm..."

A small grunt came out of Empyrean Scarletsea's mouth as Vaan stimulated the erogenous zones on Henrietta's body.

Evidently, Empyrean Scarletsea was feeling the sensual pleasure derived from them.

Even if she was an Empyrean God in her past life, she was currently no different from a mortal whilst she shared her disciple's body and all its senses.

Suddenly, a mischievous urge to tease Empyrean Scarletsea sprouted in Vaan's heart.

As Vaan stimulated Henrietta's body with the Heavenly Massage and heard several more subtle grunts, pants, and moans from Empyrean Scarletsea, he collected various information from her reaction and stiff, rigid movements.

The information allowed him to understand that while Empyrean Scarletsea had some experience with dual practice, she couldn't be considered skilled.

Whether it was her expression or movement, both seemed forced.

Vaan quickly understood that even though Empyrean Scarletsea volunteered to dual practice with him in her disciple's stead, she still had her own mental barriers to overcome.

"Hnngg..!"

Empyrean Scarletsea panted under the pleasure of Vaan's skillful fingers. She subtly clenched her fists and appeared tensed and stiff.

The details did not escape Vaan's gaze.

Nevertheless, he didn't say anything as he suddenly lay Empyrean Scarletsea down on the bed to help with the relaxation of the body.

Afterward, he resumed his single-man work like he was working back at the Earthly Pleasure Manor. He took it slow and steady with his Heavenly Massage to ease his dual-practice partner into the mood.

Even if the mind was saying no, the body...

Chapter 583: Henrietta's Envy

"Nngg..!"

Empyrean Scarletsea made another soft, muffled grunt as Vaan pressed ten different acupoints simultaneously, producing an overwhelming surge of euphoria in her disciple's body.

The otherworldly sensation flooded the body, causing it to become tense. But after a few moments, the feeling receded like the tides washing away the sand, leaving the body in a state of relaxation.

The state of relaxation was also a state of emptiness.

After the pores in the body were stimulated, opened, and then relaxed, the surrounding mana flowed inside like water from the opening of the floodgates – the opened pores produced a suction force, drawing in the mana.

The invigorating feeling of mana and bliss from Vaan's Heavenly Massage gave Empyrean Scarletsea a wondrous feeling.

"Hnngg...!"

Empyrean Scarletsea continued to grunt and pant as she clenched her teeth, refusing to release the sweet melody of her feminine voice. She found such types of lewd and erotic voices to be shameful and humiliating for a person of her status.

As such, she stubbornly suppressed it.

However, Vaan was like a piano master as his fingers danced on Henrietta's body; he treated it like an old grand piano that needed fine-tuning. It was only a matter of time before it produced the desired chimes.

"Nngg~!"

Empyrean Scarletsea quivered in delight as her disciple's body climaxed, spraying a fountain of love nectar. She rested one arm over her eyes to cover them as she couldn't bear to see the shameful display of her disciple's body.

Even though it wasn't her body, she was the one in control. Thus, it was not much different from being her body.

"Heuk..! Ahng~!"

While Emyrean Scarletsea was relaxing in recovery from the body's climax, Vaan's naughty fingers targeted her love cave, taking her by surprise.

As a result, Emyrean Scarletsea finally produced a soft, sweet, and captivating moan for Vaan to hear.

"That's a lovely voice, Emyrean Scarletsea. I don't know why you would try to suppress it," Vaan casually commented despite knowing the answer. "You are only making this less enjoyable for yourself by holding it back."

"Are you mocking me, Sir Vaan?" Emyrean Scarletsea flashed a cold glare at Vaan.

"Mocking you? Not at all," Vaan calmly shook his head and said, "There's nothing shameful about this. You're only making this difficult for yourself by believing it is, Emyrean Scarletsea. Surrender yourself to pleasure, and a world of bliss awaits."

"How can you let Henrietta reap the maximum benefits of dual practice if you are not giving it your all? There's no one else here. So, there's no need to hold back your voice. The mind does not need to suffer while the body enjoys," Vaan added.

Emyrean Scarletsea volunteered for dual practice out of necessity and guilt and not out of complete willingness. As such, their dual practice until this point had seemed strained and forced.

Given his skills and experience, there was no need to go through such a dual-practice session; it should be natural and harmonious.

Emyrean Scarletsea bit her lips as she reflected on Vaan's words.

She knew he was right.

It was time to let go of her pride as an Empyrean God. She was no longer the same as she was at her peak – just a pathetic remnant soul without a physical body abandoned by time. Her peers were no longer around.

There really was no need for her to cling to the pride of her past achievements.

More importantly, her disciple was her second chance to start anew. Thus, she should forget the past and focus on the present.

Still, Empyrean Scarletsea was surprised that Vaan had seen through her guilt.

She was aware that she had not been a good teacher. She projected her experience and expectations onto her disciple without trying to understand what her disciple truly wanted to do with her life for countless years.

Her strictness had deprived her disciple of many things.

In the process of trying to raise an excellent disciple who could surpass her achievements but also avoid the difficulties she had experienced, she was molding a doll after her perfect image instead.

Her role as a teacher should only be to teach, not enforce – her disciple should still have the freedom to make choices based on what she learned. Empyrean Scarletsea only understood that now.

She had lived such a long life, but there was still no end to learning; even she could make mistakes.

Perhaps Peak-stage Empyrean Gods couldn't advance to a higher realm because they had forgotten or abandoned something fundamentally important from when they were once mortals like everyone else.

"You're right, Sir Vaan. Some things weighed down on my mind, but my thoughts are clear now. Let us continue."

Shortly after Empyrean Scarletsea said that, she proactively removed Vaan's clothes to comfort him, albeit with trembling hands. Evidently, she still had some aversion, but she was trying.

Once both parties were completely bare, they comforted each other with their body's warmth and contact.

Vaan could see that while Empyrean Scarletsea understood dual practice, she wasn't skilled in it.

Perhaps her skills had dwindled over the long years of inactivity, or she simply didn't engage in such practice frequently enough during her lifetime in the Divine Realm.

Of the two, the latter seemed more likely.

"Ahngg~!"

Empyrean Scarletsea let out a melodious moan as Vaan teased her white rabbits and love cave simultaneously with his mouth and hands.

"That was a nice sound just now," Vaan grinned.

"If you tease me, I will punish you," Empyrean Scarletsea warned, but there was no threatening connotation behind her words.

Meanwhile, Henrietta continued watching her master and Vaan become more immersed in dual practice.

Everything her master felt, she also felt.

However, she couldn't help but feel a sense of solitude as a spectator watching from the sideline. She shared her senses with her master, but the one dual practicing with Vaan was her master, not her. It should have been her, but that was not the case.

Envy sprouted inside Henrietta's heart as she continued watching Empyrean Scarletsea and Vaan enjoy their skinship.

It was only a matter of time before they moved to the next step.

Chapter 584: Courage and Determination

When Henrietta thought about that, she found it not okay to let it be; she should be the one to experience such a moment with Vaan, not just from the side but as the one in control of her body.

At the same time, she realized she had been too selfish – her cowardice and lack of wilfulness were selfishness.

How could she let her master dual practice with Vaan in her stead?

Throughout the years, her master had been trying to teach her the disadvantageous of love through her own experiences and regrets. Evidently, her master once had a lover. But due to a lack of talent, the lover died early, unable to accompany her master to the end of time.

How much time has passed, and yet her master still remembered her old lover?

Her master was making a great sacrifice for her!

There were some things she had to face on her own. Letting her master take care of them would only hurt the both of them.

...

"Shall we take it to the next step, Empyrean Scarletsea?"

"...Alright."

Following Vaan's suggestion, Empyrean Scarletsea briefly hesitated before agreeing.

However, Vaan suddenly flipped her over, forcing her to lie on her stomach and show her back to him. This abrupt change naturally caused her some confusion.

"What are you doing, Sir Vaan?" Empyrean Scarletsea asked doubtfully.

"I figured this position would be more exciting and also easier for you to take, Emyrean Scarletsea," Vaan calmly answered.

However, he was thinking Emyrean Scarletsea deserved the backdoor.

A woman's first time was special – Vaan figured Henrietta would regret it if someone else took her place during the moment it was lost.

"I-I see... Go on then," Emyrean Scarletsea encouraged, but she couldn't help but feel a sense of danger.

Her body jolted when she suddenly felt her backdoor getting rubbed.

However, before she could question Vaan's suspicious action, she suddenly lost control of her disciple's body.

'Noooo—!' Henrietta cried.

Henrietta's envy had suddenly exploded the moment her master gave Vaan the cue to take her innocence. She mustered the determination to wrestle back control of her body; she had to be the one to experience that moment with Vaan.

However, the moment Henrietta regained control, she immediately realized her backdoor was in jeopardy as Vaan's dragon head was already barraging it but failing to enter.

The backdoor was too tightly shut and narrow for Vaan's huge dragon to enter smoothly without hurting Henrietta's body. The backdoor required time and patience to enlarge.

Nevertheless, Vaan immediately stopped when he sensed Emyrean Scarletsea's unique, grand aura disappeared, replaced by Henrietta's original aura.

"You're so mean," Henrietta spat with a teary-eye, wronged look as she glanced over her shoulders and covered her backdoor with one hand.

She had mustered all her courage to regain control and enjoy the special moment with Vaan, but the latter was aiming for her backdoor...

"Ahem," Vaan coughed before apologizing with an ignorant look, "My bad. It seemed I poked the wrong hole."

Although Vaan's big dragon head didn't make its way through the backdoor, it was still a horrible feeling of discomfort for Henrietta.

Of course, whether it was Henrietta or Empyrean Scarletsea, both would only have this horrible feeling of discomfort at the start if they were originally repulsed by the idea.

However, their minds would quickly change once they had a taste of the true pleasure derived from it.

Most witches in the seven witch kingdoms were against this uncommon and unorthodox method of dual practice. Since they would feel violated and disgusted, manwhores wouldn't even get the chance to explain themselves before getting killed by their enraged clients.

As such, Vaan never had the chance to try the backdoor when he was still weak.

But now?

He was definitely powerful and influential enough to experience it without needing to risk his own neck in the process.

However, even he had to agree it was mean of him to attempt the backdoor with Henrietta when she had yet to lose her innocence.

Who knew she would suddenly come back during the critical moment?

"Shall we continue normally?" Vaan softly asked, wiping Henrietta's watery eyes with his thumb as he appeared gentle and caring.

"Mm..."

Henrietta nodded, lowering her head shyly as her stomach was quickly filled with butterflies when she was around Vaan again.

Nevertheless, she turned around and wrapped her arms around Vaan's neck, pulling his head into her bosom. It was easier for her to tolerate the uneasy feeling when she wasn't looking directly into his eyes.

"Ahhh...!"

Henrietta softly cried when Vaan suddenly took the chance to nibble on her small rabbits and reach his hand down to rub her already wet and soaking love cave.

Her body shuddered with delight, causing her to hug Vaan's head in her chest even tighter.

"I'm going in."

"Mm."

Henrietta quietly consented, having already prepared herself. Even so, a rising sense of nervousness, fear, and anticipation still welled up inside her heart.

A few moments later, a sharp pain in her nether region caused her expression to crumple as Vaan slowly forced his enraged dragon inside the new, unexplored dragon cave.

Due to Vaan's oversized rod and Henrietta's slightly less developed body, the latter was forced to experience a greater deal of pain from something tearing inside her. Even so, she didn't want to give up after coming so far.

Her nails pressed into Vaan's skin, and her whole body tensed as she endured Vaan entering deeper and deeper inside her.

"Aahhh—!"

Eventually, a startling cry of pain and joy resounded within the bedchamber, signifying the completion of Henrietta's union with Vaan and her graduation from maidenhood.

Henrietta thought the overall process of dual practice would be painful throughout. But to herself, the pain was only temporary, and the sheer bliss that followed was overwhelming and magical, like the discovery of a new world.

It was like standing at the edge of an abyss with nerve-wracking fear of the unknown – one wouldn't know what was on the other side until one took the first leap.

Following the continuation of Vaan and Henrietta's dual practice, filled with passionate joy and exhilarating excitement, a blue beam of concentrated mana descended from the sky. It landed on Henrietta's palatial black magic tower and covered it in overflowing mana.

The unprecedented event attracted all eyes, near and afar, wherever the beam of blue light could be seen.

Chapter 585: Dubrolf Thorfnir

At the northwesternmost border of the Great Ratholos Empire, a grand rift existed, splitting the lands of the Great Ratholos Empire from the Raging Tempest Kingdom, one of the seven witch kingdoms of the north.

The grand rift wasn't naturally formed but created by the early conflicts between the seven witch kingdoms and the Great Ratholos Empire after the Holy War against Gehenna ended.

After all, the vast land of the seven witch kingdoms used to be an undeveloped wilderness divided by countless minor feudal lords prior to Gehenna's appearance.

In the original history of Pangea, many countries had sent troops to join the war efforts to put a stop to Gehenna's invasion. Many witches had sacrificed themselves in the Holy War, but even more so for men.

After the end of the Holy War, the witches did not return to their home countries. They stayed in the north, formed the seven kingdoms of witches on the underdeveloped northern lands, and declared their independence from the rest of Pangea.

Naturally, such an act was no different from defection and betrayal.

That was the beginning of the bad relationship between the seven witch kingdoms and the other countries on Pangea.

Several countries had sent punitive forces to bring back their runaways on multiple occasions, and the Great Ratholos Empire was no exception.

The repeated conflicts created the grand rift of today and definitively divided the territories of the Raging Tempest Kingdom and the Great Ratholos Empire from each other. As a result, the Great Ratholos Empire and the other southern countries eventually gave up pursuing their runaways.

Although they never verbally acknowledged the seven witch kingdoms' independence, their silence and lack of actions thereafter were no different from one.

Since their last contact, the grand rift, which was later called the Great Divide, had grown incomparably wide and deep that no one had attempted to cross it in the past two hundred and fifty years nor knew what lay at the bottom of its depths.

Dust clouds and storms obscured its depths during the day, and darkness hid it at night.

Nevertheless, if there was one thing everyone in the region certainly knew, it was that a fair number of witches and men were buried down there.

On the southern edge of the Great Divide, a sturdy outpost of metal stood erected to observe and guard against the northern witch kingdoms. The Great Divide might have separated the territories, but it was also a great cover for the daring who wished to cross and infiltrate the other side.

Ironrust Fortress was the name of the outpost.

An extremely muscular and bald man adorned in rough animal hide, leather, and fur, full of battle scars, sat by the edge of the northern wall, gazing into the depths of the Great Divide as he reminisced history with a half-empty wineskin for company.

The bald man didn't seem particularly special besides looking like a battle-hardened warrior, but he was the only general in charge of the north – Dubrolof Thorfnir.

He was also a mighty Peak-level Rank 4 Body Refiner.

From time to time, Dubrolf Thorfnir would sip from his wineskin and pour some of his cheap red wine into the depths of the Great Divide like he was toasting the spirits of the fallen warriors in the region.

"General, take a look! What do you think that is?!" a Low-level Rank 2 warrior on watch duty suddenly exclaimed from the far left-hand side of the wall, prompting Dubrolf to look over.

Dubrolf followed the direction pointed by the warrior's finger before his lazy eyes flashed with focus as they narrowed on the faint pillar of blue light in the distant horizon.

"This is..." Dubrolf frowned.

Even after observing the faint pillar of blue light, Dubrolf couldn't confidently guess what it was. That said, there weren't many things that could be blue, light-like, and sky-piercing.

The pillar of blue light could be the result of a powerful spell, or... it could be a pure concentration of mana.

Dubrolf didn't like either of the two possibilities he could think of.

Regardless of the two possibilities, it appeared to be something that would only benefit the witch kingdoms. It was hard to predict how the witches would act if the balance of power were broken by them.

"This pillar of blue light is coming from... the Verdant Wood Kingdom?" Dubrolf guessed before quickly changing his mind, "No, that's not right... It should be the Black Rose Kingdom!"

But upon realizing the pillar of blue light was coming from the Black Rose Kingdom, Dubrolf revealed an even more unsettled expression.

The Black Rose Kingdom had undergone so many astonishing changes that even the Great Ratholos Empire, which didn't share its borders, had heard about them.

However, even if the Black Rose Kingdom's developments improved humanity's winning chances against Gehenna, there were many countries that wouldn't be happy with it. Dubrolf and many high-ranking members of the Great Ratholos Empire were no exceptions.

No one wanted a kingdom of witches to become the leader of humanity.

"Summon all commander-level warriors to the war council room. We are having a meeting!"

"Yes, General!"

Following Dubrolf's order, one of the sentries quickly hurried off to carry out the task without the slightest delay or hesitation.

A few minutes later, twelve barbaric-looking warriors, full of their own battle scars and stories, were gathered inside the war council room with Dubrolf. None was weaker than a Low-level Rank 4 Body Refiner.

They gathered around a large, round stone table with a detailed map laid out on top of it.

However, the map didn't possess the subject of interest for their gathering; it only contained details of the Great Divide, the Great Ratholos Empire's northwestern borders, and the Raging Tempest Kingdom's southern borders.

"Everyone should already know why I've called you heard. The emperor had decreed any discoveries, big or small, related to the seven witch kingdoms, and the Black Rose Kingdom, in particular, should be reported to him immediately."

"Which one of you is willing to ride back to the capital with haste and inform His Imperial Majesty about the pillar of blue light?"

"I am willing, General!"

"I am, General!"

...

Dubrolf's question received all twelve willing answers from the attending commanders in the meeting.

"It's good that you are all willing. However, I only need one person for the job," Dubrolf stated before picking out one person, "Vath, you do it."

"At your command, General!" Vath immediately answered with a solemn salute.

"Godspeed, Vath."

"Yes, General!"

Shortly after Vath headed out and called his wyvern down from the sky, he immediately departed for the Great Ratholos Empire's capital city.

Afterward, Dubrolf turned his attention to the remaining elven commanders for advice.

"It's not a short distance to the capital, and we don't know how long the pillar of blue light will remain. Given our limited information, His Imperial Majesty might blame our Ironduist Fortress if we don't take extra measures to collect more information on the pillar of blue light."

"Who has a good idea on how we can collect more information about the pillar of blue light in the Black Rose Kingdom?"

"How about contacting the dark organizations, General?" a commander suggested.

"Contact the dark organizations?" Dubrolf repeated before spouting with disapproval, "You must be kidding me, Vevolf. That's your good idea? After the revelation regarding the Assembly of Silent Night, who still dares to make dealings with the dark organizations?"

"Let us not even mention the Assembly of Silent Night's bases in the Black Rose Kingdom and Holy Knight Empire have been uprooted. The other countries are busy hunting down their remaining branches."

"Everyone is trying to disassociate themselves from the Assembly of Silent Night to avoid being labeled as an accomplice of Great Devil Helcan's Contractor. Even Midnight Company and Nightmare Order are under scrutiny of whether they are affiliated with Gehenna's other Great Devils."

"And yet, you suggest we should seek the dark organizations for help?" Dubrolf asked with a frown.

Originally, Pangea had a divided belief regarding Gehenna's intentions.

Some believed the Gehenna's seven Great Devils couldn't wait to invade Pangea again and that they were only biding their time for a better opportunity. Others thought Gehenna's seven Great Devils had given up on Pangea due to their lack of invasion since the last Holy War.

As such, a fair number of countries didn't mind the existence of a Devil's Contractor, even after learning there were six hidden on Pangea.

After all, ever since people learned about their existence through the demon intel extraction, the Devil's Contractors have not brought any disaster upon Pangea.

But after news of Ulrich Salazar's scheme spread after the war between the Holy Knight Empire and the Black Rose Kingdom, many people realized Great Devil Helcan wanted to weaken Pangea by causing the human countries to wage war against each other through his contractee.

As such, the whole of humanity was finally wary of all Devil's Contractors—as it should be.

"I'm sorry, General," Vevolf apologized before saying, "However, I don't think we have any other options if we desperately need the information. The Black Rose Kingdom is too far from us."

"Actually, we do have another option," another commander suddenly mentioned.

Chapter 586: Victoria Caelestis

"Oh?" Dubrolf turned to the braided-hair commander and said, "There's another option? Quickly share it then, Kog."

"Yes, General," Kog complied with a nod before mentioning, "Lord Mortimer was sent to the Holy Knight Empire some time ago to negotiate a trade for His Imperial Majesty."

"Given the current special relationship between the Holy Knight Empire and the Black Rose Kingdom, it might be possible for Lord Mortimer to be openly granted access to the Black Rose Kingdom if his talk with the Holy Knight Empire goes well."

"Lord Mortimer? Mortimer Tombend? That blockhead?" Dubrolf frowned with doubts at the mention of the name.

His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Varan, was not a fool.

His Imperial Majesty should have known better than to assign Mortimer to an important mission like negotiating with foreign countries when there were far better candidates for the job.

But the fact that His Imperial Majesty did would imply that negotiating with the Holy Knight Empire was not that important.

Did His Imperial Majesty send Mortimer to gauge the Holy Knight Empire's stance on the dragon blood? – Dubrolf wondered.

That might be the case.

"I don't expect Mortimer's group to do well in the Holy Knight Empire. However, it doesn't change the fact that he is currently in the Holy Knight Empire. Perhaps he will surprise us with unexpected results," Dubrolf said optimistically before coolly asking, "Do we have any way to contact him?"

"We don't, General. However, Lord Khargen from the Grimfort Barony and Great Elder Fraelmir in the capital city should have sound-transmission artifacts connected to Lord Mortimer," Kog answered.

"Grimfort Barony and the capital..." Dubrolf muttered, his gaze flickered before firmly saying, "The capital is too far to reach out to Great Elder Fraelmir. On the other hand, Grimfort Barony is only a couple hour's ride from here."

"Since you were the one who suggested and appeared to be the most familiar with it, I will leave the task of contacting Lord Khargen to you, Kog."

"Understood, General!" Kog answered resolutely.

Suddenly, a regular warrior barged into the meeting room with hasty steps and attracted everyone's attention.

"General! The pillar of blue light has disappeared!" the regular warrior informed.

"Haiz..." Dubroolf immediately sighed, seemingly not surprised but disappointed nonetheless, before saying, "I wasn't expecting it to last, but it still disappeared much faster than I had ho—"

"General!"

Before Dubroolf could finish speaking, another regular warrior, who had also been on sentry duty, barged into the meeting room.

"The pillar of blue light has returned!" the second regular warrior informed.

"..."

Dubroolf was speechless, not knowing what to think. The subsequent good and bad news left a sour taste in his mouth.

If the pillar of blue light was going to disappear and come back, why couldn't they report it to him together instead of separately?

"So the pillar of blue light can come back after disappearing... That's good. At least, we know there's still a chance it will come back even if it disappears while we try to figure out what it—"

"General!"

"Dammit!"

Dubroolf suddenly cursed after being interrupted again. He immediately glared at the third warrior, who had suddenly arrived.

"What is it this time?" Dubrolf snapped.

"T-The pillar of blue light has disappeared again!"

"..."

Dubrolf did not respond to the third warrior; he simply stared at the person in silence, seemingly pondering and waiting for something.

A short moment later, the hasty footsteps of a fourth warrior were heard as the person barged into the meeting room with seemingly urgent news.

"General!" the fourth warrior called.

"What?" Dubrolf glanced at the fourth warrior indifferently and guessed, "The pillar of blue light has returned again?"

"Yes... That's right, General," the fourth warrior replied with mild astonishment.

Following the fourth warrior's confirmation, Dubrolf briefly closed his eyes to rest them. Moments later, they snapped open with a fierce glare.

"You are all messing with me, right?" Dubrolf accused them.

...

...

...

The unprecedented phenomena brought by Vaan and Henrietta's dual practice attracted all kinds of attention, near and far.

While people from distant countries could only observe the visual appearance of the pillar of blue light, those close to the Black Rose Kingdom with high mana sensitivity could feel its surging waves of mana.

However, of the two neighboring witch kingdoms, only Scarlet Flame Kingdom was interested enough to send people to investigate.

On the other hand, the Verdant Wood Kingdom did not dare.

After all, the Verdant Wood Kingdom had recently lost its Transcendent Witch ruler. It was also in the middle of a transitional phase of becoming a vassal country of the Black Rose Kingdom. Thus, very few people from the kingdom would have the courage to step into the Black Rose Kingdom before Queen Henrietta's stance regarding their kingdom became clear.

...

The Scarlet Flame Kingdom...

The land of fire was a place full of active volcanoes stretching to the Dragon Mountain Range in the east, the Violent Tributary in the south, and the Treacherous Sea in the west.

Originally, it was a Perilous Land that shouldn't be habitable by humans.

However, the Scarlet Flame Transcendent Witch led her people there and cultivated it into a haven for all fire-attribute witches due to the rich fire elements that could be found throughout the vast volcanic region.

As such, the Scarlet Flame Kingdom's fire-attribute witches also experience faster growth and improvements than any other witch kingdoms.

If the battle prowess of the seven Transcendent Witches were excluded from the seven witch kingdom's comparison, the Scarlet Flame Kingdom would be noticeably stronger than the other six kingdoms—at least, before the Black Rose Kingdom gained thousands of new High Witches.

That said, the Scarlet Flame Kingdom's lead in power wasn't attributed to its overall number of higher-rank witches.

In fact, it was due to the Great House of Caelestis, which resided there despite being a mighty household of spatial-attribute witches. No other individual household in the seven witch kingdoms could compare to the Great House of Caelestis, whether it was influence, power, or wealth.

The Great House of Caelestis was only below the Transcendent Witches.

Nevertheless, despite being an ancient family with its roots in the Verdant Wood Kingdom, no one outside of it knew exactly why it arbitrarily decided to move to the Scarlet Flame Kingdom, where it was difficult for most people to live.

Still, if there was one thing everyone knew, it was that the Great House of Caelestis could be found at Black Dragon Peak.

Black Dragon Peak wasn't the tallest volcanic mountain in the Scarlet Flame Kingdom's eastern region.

However, the Great House of Caelestis did mold it into one, making it even taller than the mountain peaks in the Dragon Mountain Range, which divided the border between the Scarlet Flame Kingdom and the Black Rose Kingdom.

At that moment, a beautiful woman with age-worn eyes that did not match her young Darkan appearance could be found observing the pillar of blue light from the wooden pavilion built by the easternmost edge of the mountain peak.

Her name was Victoria Caelestis.

Although she looked young, she was already a grandmother to others. And although she wasn't the matriarch, her status in the Great House of Caelestis was only second to one.

"This pillar of concentrated mana contains traces of fire and space attributes..." Victoria Caelestis muttered with a frown as she thought of something.

Only one person in the entire Black Rose Kingdom had practiced fire and space magic to a great degree – Henrietta Rosegarden.

As such, only such a person could have caused such a stir in the elements.

However, what kind of phenomenon was this pillar of blue light?

Did Queen Henrietta break through the Transcendent Rank? – Victoria Caelestis suddenly wondered with surprise.

Chapter 587: Damn Prophecy

As Victoria Caelestis contemplated the cause behind the pillar of blue light appearing in the Black Rose Kingdom by the small pavilion on the edge of the mountain peak, a young lady with a slight resemblance snuck up on her.

Suddenly, the young lady pounced once she reached within a few steps of Victoria.

However, Victoria had already noticed the person's presence. Still, she chose not to evade the young creature's sneak attack.

"What do you want this time, Valerie?" Victoria calmly asked as she was hugged affectionately from behind by her granddaughter, Valerie Caelestis, knowing she came with a purpose.

Valerie Caelestis, the firstborn of Victoria's second daughter, Vivian Caelestis – she also shared the common trait of Darkans.

After all, the Great House of Caelestis was a household of Darkans and possibly the most publicly recognized and prominent Darkan household.

"Grandma, I want to join the others on the trip to the Black Rose Kingdom," Valerie requested with a puppy look, hoping to soften Victoria's heart and receive her approval.

Unfortunately, Victoria immediately frowned with strong disapproval when she heard Valerie's request.

"Absolutely not!"

Victoria's firm rejection shook Valerie's heart, causing her eyes to turn dull with disappointment. But after a moment of consideration, she bit her lips stubbornly, and her eyes glazed with defiance.

"Why can't I go when others can, Grandma?!" Valerie argued.

"Because it's too dangerous, and you are not nearly as strong enough!" Victoria firmly stated with a stern, decisive glare.

"But I am already a Senior Witch!" Valeria stubbornly argued.

"So what if you are a Senior Witch?! Is a Senior Witch strong!?" Victoria thundered before mentioning, "The Black Rose Kingdom has thousands of High Witches now! Do you think becoming the youngest Mid-stage Senior Witch in your current generation makes you strong, Valerie? Wake up!"

"Without the backing of our great house, you are nothing on your own! The world is full of hungry wolves and scheming foxes. You will not survive very long out there while holding onto whatever pride you have as a member of our great house. And do not think that my words are harsh; I am trying to make you aware of the brutal reality to save your life!"

"Your Fourth Aunt had also been a great talent, perhaps even the greatest talent our great house ever had since the dawn of magic! Everyone believed she would become a Transcendent Witch one day, but what happened to her in the end?"

"When I let her out to experience the outside world, she fell in some unknown place and time before anyone could witness her full potential!" Victoria bellowed loudly, eyes and tone filled with remorse and sorrow as she recalled the past.

She blamed herself for each and every one of her children's deaths. She felt like she had failed them by not adequately preparing them and educating them well.

Her fourth child, Vivienne Caelestis, naturally wasn't the only child she had lost in her 333 years of life.

In her life, Victoria Caelestis had given birth to five daughters and three sons. Given the low fertility of witches, producing eight offspring in three hundred years was considered somewhat impressive.

Unfortunately, only two daughters were still living and breathing among the five daughters and three sons.

The rest had met with untimely deaths one by one.

"I only have you, your mother, and your Third Aunt left. I will not risk losing any more of my children and grandchildren. I have already lost too many," Victoria firmly stated without any intention of ever changing her mind.

She was tired of seeing her children departing the world of the living before her.

As such, for dangerous missions outside the family's territory, Victoria would only assign them to indirect descendants and outer members.

After Valerie listened to her grandmother's words, her head somewhat cooled down before she frowned in thought. Being reminded of the untimely deaths of every direct member of the family who had ever gone out for experience, she couldn't help but have some doubts.

"Grandma, isn't it strange that our family is always dying outside our territory despite our great prestige across the seven witch kingdoms? Are we being targeted by someone?" Valerie asked.

"That's right!" another woman's voice answered from afar.

Valerie and Victoria glanced over and found a beautiful, fairy-like lady approaching their location from some distance away. The lady appeared young but possessed an age that did not match her appearance, like Victoria.

Furthermore, the lady shared some resemblance to Victoria.

"Third Grandma," Valerie greeted respectfully upon the lady's arrival at their small pavilion by the edge of the mountain peak.

The lady was Victoria Caelestis's younger sister, Vera Caelestis. She was also a powerful High Witch like her siblings.

Besides Vera Caelestis, Victoria also had an elder sister, who was the current acting head of the Great House, and three other younger sisters.

Vera Caelestis was the third eldest child in their family.

If their nine brothers had not all passed away from old age, they would still be a family of fifteen siblings. Their family wasn't small before the dawn of magic. In fact, their Caelestis family was even larger before Gehenna's appearance.

It wasn't strange for a great house to have many direct family members of the same generation.

After all, it was the oldest and most straightforward trick to building up a powerful, wealthy, or influential household.

If one lacked the talents to create power, wealth, or influence, then one should produce an offspring who could. If having one wasn't enough, then have three more. If having three more still wasn't enough, then have an additional five, and so on!

In a bad pool of ten children, if nine turned out to be talentless idiots, the tenth child was bound to be a talent, at least!

"Mm."

Vera Caelestis acknowledged her granddaughter's greeting with a casual nod before she shifted her attention to Victoria with a smile.

"I knew I would find you here, Second Sister," Vera commented, implying she had been looking for her. But then, she looked back at Valerie to continue their topic, reaffirming her previous claim, "Our family is, indeed, being targeted."

"It's even possible that the ruler of every country on the continent wants everyone carrying the blood of Caelestis to die out," Vera added, startling Valerie.

"Why?" Valerie furrowed her brows in confusion and doubt.

"I don't remember learning about our family having big feuds with anyone... In fact, besides our relationship with the Black Rose Kingdom, which had become estranged, our Great House of Caelestis seems to be on good terms with every other witch kingdom, Third Grandma?"

"Haiz... Even if we are on good terms with others, it doesn't necessarily mean they won't secretly plot against us for their own interests. You don't need to be enemies for others to want to kill you," Victoria interjected with a sigh.

"That's right!" Vera fully agreed before her eyes flickered with a fierce glint full of anger and hate.

"But if it wasn't for that damn prophecy made by that wretched old sack of decaying bones from the Great Ratholos Empire, would our siblings, children, and grandchildren continuously die outside for no reason?!"

"Prophecy? What prophecy?" Valerie blinked with a blank look.

She had never heard of any prophecy.

Moreover, were such things even worth believing?

Chapter 588: Something Sinister

"Exactly. What prophecy, huh?" Vera added to Valerie's doubt with a helpless smile, shaking her head.

Even she did not believe in the prophecy made by the Chief Shaman who lived in the Great Ratholos Empire. Unfortunately, just because she didn't believe in the prophecy, it didn't mean it was the same for others, too.

Furthermore, even if others didn't believe it, they couldn't ignore it either.

"The Great Ratholos Empire's Chief Shaman previously prophesized that a human with high spatial affinity would be born and become this world's overlord, ruling all of the high skies, vast lands, and deep seas," Vera recounted.

Valerie blinked as she waited, expecting her Third Grandmother to continue. But after waiting a brief moment, she realized that was all there was to the so-called prophecy.

"That's it...?" Valeria uttered dumbfoundedly before mentioning with a frown, "But our Caelestis family wasn't specifically mentioned in this so-called prophecy. So, why are people only hunting our family?"

"We aren't the only ones being secretly hunted outside of our territory, Valerie," Vera corrected with a soft sigh.

"Haven't you wondered why people with spatial affinity seem so rare nowadays? That's because they have been either killed or abducted by various forces in the last couple of hundred years. Our Great House of Caelestis might look impressive, but we are at the mercy of every nation."

"If it weren't for our life-saving means and various agreements with other countries, our Great House of Caelestis would have long ceased to exist in the first century of the magic era," Vera stated.

In that instant, the revelation was like a bolt of lightning, shocking Valerie greatly when she heard it. She didn't expect the Great House of Caelestis, which she was so proud of, to be in such a precarious situation.

"In order to ensure our independence and survival, the family made an oath to stay out of every country's management and politics. But at the same time, we also married off our family members to royalty of various countries to establish connections and acquire protection," Vera added.

When the Great Ratholos Empire's Chief Shaman's prophecy spread across the world, every country naturally eyed the biggest family with spatial affinity – the Great House of Caelestis.

Even if rulers didn't believe in prophecies, they would not be able to ignore the slightest possibility, whether it was for the sake of their personal or national interest. As such, if the Great House of Caelestis had done nothing, they would have been swallowed by everyone.

Anyone who enjoyed the highest position of power would never want to bow their heads to another.

That's why selfish, ambitious rulers would never think about befriending the future overlord before the person could rise to power. Instead, they would try to control the person before they became aware of their destiny. And if they couldn't control the destined person, they would rather destroy them.

However, thanks to the Great House of Caelestis's great escaping ability and quick wit, Vera and her family evaded various encirclements countless times in the beginning. Although they were forced to abandon their homes during that period, they established the status of being uncatchable.

With that advantage, they formed agreements with neighboring rulers and established connections through marriage bondings in secret. It was also because the marriage ceremonies were held in secret that the rulers failed to realize the Great House of Caelestis made the same marriage agreement with other rulers besides themselves.

As a result, they ended up letting the Great House of Caelestis establish a situation where the rulers were forced to end their hunts on the Great House of Caelestis and be on guard against each other.

After all, after everything went public, they could no longer openly target the Great House of Caelestis. Their citizens would scrutinize and condemn their actions against their in-laws, and other countries would also try to interfere with their operations once they learn of it.

Under such circumstances, the Great House of Caelestis no longer needed to run and was able to settle down.

They only experience danger once they leave their territory.

Nevertheless, after listening to Vera's additional information, Valerie immediately expressed her surprise.

"Does that mean I have many uncles, aunties, and cousins I didn't know about living outside the territory?" Valerie uttered with wide eyes.

However, Vera could only silently shake her head with a saddened look.

Victoria also sighed with melancholy.

"Did I say something wrong?" Valerie blinked with surprise after noticing her two grandmothers' expressions. After a moment, her brows crumpled together. "Don't tell me they are also... gone?! Even with royal protection??"

"That's just how it is for people with spatial affinity outside our territory," Vera said with a sad sigh.

Rather than marrying their members to royal families, it was more accurate to say they had sacrificed them.

After all, they made an oath to be uninvolved in other countries' management and politics. The family members they had married off would not have any power or authority. Even if they held the status of husband or wife of the princes and princesses, their lives were most likely equal to or worse than slaves.

"Poisoning," Vera suddenly stated, clenching her fist grudgingly.

"Most of your distant aunties, uncles, and cousins, whom you have never met, died to this – or at least, that was the reason we were given each time. Even if all the countries seem amicable to each other on the surface, they are all secretly competing against each other."

"How regretful it is that we have to face these kinds of situations when the world is facing a threat as large as Gehenna," Vera thought honestly.

"I don't get it, Third Grandma," Valerie replied with a deep frown before mentioning, "If the prophecy was real, this destined overlord should be someone very powerful if the person is able to unify the world in the future."

"In that case, why are so many people with spatial affinity dying?! Are all those pig-brains trying to kill off a potential savior?!" Valerie cursed.

It went without saying that if humanity had such a strong person, they would be less threatened by Gehenna.

"Alas, that question is the biggest doubt we have all these years. One cannot help but suspect something sinister and insidious is involved regarding this prophecy," Victoria said with narrowed eyes.

People with spatial affinities were great assets to humanity. To kill them off would benefit none other than the demons from Gehenna.

"And unfortunately, none of us have the power to find out the real motive behind the Chief Shaman's prophecy," Vera said with a sad smile. "That is the sad truth."

Everyone was aware they lacked the power to unmask the truth—or rather, they couldn't afford to take on the risks and dangers. They were the pillars of the family. If they fell, the Great House of Caelestis would become vulnerable.

That was why they had chosen to stay within their territory and focus on stability and continuation.

Humanity had so many people. How could the task of unmasking Gehenna's potential schemes fall on their shoulders alone?

If their Great House of Caelestis had a Transcendent, everything would change.

Chapter 589: Soul Lamp

After Valerie grasped the real situation regarding her Great House of Caelestis, she realized how much of a sheltered life she had been living.

At the same time, her strong desire to explore the outside world dwindled. Even though she still wished to go outside, she didn't want her stubborn insistence to trouble her beloved family. The dangers lurking outside their family's territory were beyond her imagination.

Just as her grandmother had mentioned, her power as a Senior Witch was insignificant; it wouldn't cause any ripples in the vast world. She would not be able to count on it to preserve her life.

Thus, even if she managed to convince her grandmothers to let her out, she would have to rely on the power of the family's servants for protection, and even then, they would most likely not be strong enough to protect her from the dangers lurking outside.

After giving up the idea to venture outside, Valerie felt a pensive sadness welling up inside her when she thought about the fallen family members married outside.

Forget about their name and relation to her; she didn't even know of their existence even though they came from the same family.

Wasn't that just sad?

"Third Grandma, a Caelestis will forever be a Caelestis, even if they have been married outside the family. And their sacrifice must be remembered. Since everyone married outside had died, do we have a place to worship and remember them? I wish to pay my respects," Valerie sincerely requested.

Vera smiled with gratification as she approved of her granddaughter's character.

"We do," Vera nodded and said, "I can take you to our family's memorial hall later to pay respect to the dearly departed."

"However, I have to correct one thing; not everyone married outside the family is dead," Vera suddenly added shortly after.

"At the very least, your Ninth Grandpa's fourth daughter, Verity Weissman, which is to say, your aunt, Aunt Verity, is still living well in the Freedom Federation. Unlike everyone else, she was quite loved. As such, she was able to play a significant role in forming the Freedom Federation it is today."

"Furthermore, her son and granddaughter are also extremely talented individuals. Thus, her current position is quite untouchable. She is very safe," Vera added with a slight smile, feeling proud and a sense of loss.

After all, her niece's achievements, wealth, and power no longer had anything to do with the Great House of Caelestis after she was married away. Even if the person carried the blood of the Caelestis family, the person would only live for the Weissman family she was married into.

Furthermore, they had zero contact for two hundred years.

"Verity Weissman... Weissman..."

Valerie muttered with furrowed brows, finding the familiar. After a moment, her eyes widened in shocking realization.

"Isn't that the family name of Freedom Federation's current president, President Hugo?!" Valerie exclaimed with disbelief.

"Ah, yes... Aunt Verity's son, your distant cousin, is quite impressive, isn't he?" Vera calmly nodded.

Valerie's jaw dropped.

The shocking revelation made her stand on the spot blankly for quite a while.

During that time, Vera informed her older sister, Victoria, of the finalized preparations for the second team of elite servants, which was tasked to head to the Black Rose Kingdom.

Recalling the previous topics discussed, Victoria suddenly entered a period of deep thought before she decided to write a confidential letter sealed in wax and entrusted it to the second team of elite servants.

The second team of elite servants was tasked to deliver the letter to the Black Rose Kingdom's ruler as they carried out their primary objective.

"You want to borrow the Black Rose Transcendent Witch's power to discover the true motives of the Great Ratholos Empire's Chief Shaman, Sister? Would she agree?" Vera inquired.

"Mm," Victoria nodded, then suddenly shook her head.

"I don't know if she can do anything about it. But it won't hurt to ask. The more people know about it, the less burden we shoulder. Although I don't expect anything out of it, I still hope Queen Henrietta could do something about it."

"As do I, Sister," Vera expressed.

The Black Rose Kingdom appeared to be the center of the storm of changes in recent days. Given the borders between it and the Holy Knight Empire were no longer restricted, access to other countries in Pangea was also opened.

As such, it truly was worth asking for help, even if nothing may come of it.

After Vera finished her business with Victoria, she brought Valerie to the memorial hall, located in the most secure area underneath Black Dragon Peak. The entire underground area was fortified with defensive and complicated locking spells to prevent intruders.

It was also off-limits to regular family members.

As such, Valerie's curiosity was immediately piqued. She wondered why the memorial hall had such a huge emphasis on security.

What secrets were hidden within?

Naturally, since her Third Grandmother was willing to bring her to such a place, it didn't take long to learn why.

"Memorial Hall is divided into two areas. On your left are the rooms of the departed, and on your right are the rooms of the living," Vera casually introduced the place.

The Memorial Hall contained dozens of rooms. Each room was small and only had a few shelves holding a varying number of magic fire lamps, all with names inscribed on them.

Only after Valerie saw these magic fire lamps did she realize the importance of the place. These magic fire lamps were known as Soul Lamps, and they were produced to display one's life status.

Once bound by blood, one's Soul Lamp would continue to burn with a weak flame until they drew their last breath.

Although Valerie had no knowledge of ever binding a Soul Lamp, she had indeed found one with her inscribed name in the third room of the living. It had a weak, flickering blue flame.

Evidently, one of her grandmothers must have set it up for her when she was born.

"The fifth room is the one you are looking for, Valerie," Vera instructed as she witnessed her granddaughter heading to the first room of the departed.

However, Valerie shook her head and continued approaching the first room.

"Since I'm here, I have to pay respect to everyone and not just a selected few, Third Grandma. Not doing so would be a bit inappropriate," Valerie stated.

After Vera heard that, she smiled and no longer said anything. She simply watched in silence as her Second Sister's granddaughter entered each room to pay respect to the deceased one by one.

However, after Valerie entered the seventh room briefly, she suddenly ran back out with surprise, startling Vera.

"Third Grandma, one of the Soul Lamps in the seventh room of the departed is still burning! Was it incorrectly placed?" Valerie asked hurriedly, pointing to the seventh room behind her.

What?

"That's impossible. No one would make such a silly mistake," was what Vera said, but she still quickly strode into the seventh room to investigate.

After all, seeing how well-mannered Valerie had been after learning the truth, she didn't believe Valerie wouldn't randomly spout nonsense or play such an awful prank.

Upon entering the seventh room, Vera's gaze immediately fell on the sole burning Soul Lamp inside.

Although the fire of life was only a fraction of the size compared to Valerie's and every other burning Soul Lamp, it was undeniable that the Soul Lamp was still burning with the fire of life.

"The fire of life really is burning..." Vera muttered with a dumbfounded look as her gaze slowly shifted down to the inscribed name below.

The Soul Lamp belonged to Vivienne Caelestis, Victoria's fourth daughter and Valerie's Fourth Aunt.

"Does that mean my Fourth Aunt is still alive, Third Grandma??"

"No..."

"No?"

Valerie had asked with excitement, but Vera's answer immediately left her baffled with pending questions.

Her Fourth Aunt's Soul Lamp was still burning, but her Fourth Aunt wasn't alive...

Then what did the tiny fire of life imply?

Chapter 590: Victoria's Chance

Shortly after Vivienne Caelestis's Soul Lamp was discovered to be burning with a rekindled fire of life, Vera immediately departed from the Memorial Hall to deliver the news to her Second Sister, Victoria.

"Second Sister, you wouldn't believe what Valerie and I saw in the Memorial Hall," Vera quickly spouted upon arriving at the small pavilion. "Vivienne's Soul Lamp regained its small burning fire of life!"

Crack!

Victoria's ceramic teacup of blue and white suddenly dropped and shattered into countless shards on the hard floor. The shocking news broke Victoria's calmness and shook her heart, causing her to leap to her feet in agitation.

"Is that really true, Third Sister?! Please don't joke with me!" Victoria grabbed Vera's shoulders and asked.

"You should see it for yourself," Vera said with a helpless smile.

She wouldn't joke about such a matter, and she was aware her Second Sister also knew that. As such, her emotions weren't affected by her Second Sister's doubtful words.

After all, anyone else would have reacted the same if they heard their loved one's fire of life rekindled.

Swish!

Victoria vanished without another word and arrived at the Memorial Hall, appearing beside Valerie. Tears ran down her cheeks the moment she confirmed Vivienne's Soul Lamp had rekindled with a small fire of life.

The rekindled fire of life did not indicate her fourth daughter had come back to life. Such a small fire of life did not represent her fourth daughter's life status.

It did, however, represent the life status of Vivienne's offspring.

"It's true..." Victoria wiped her tears of joy and briefly relished in the newfound happiness before her gaze flashed with resolution as she made a decision, "I'll be joining the second team headed for the Black Rose Kingdom."

"Are you going to resume the search again, Second Sister?" Vera asked with concern, having followed Victoria back to the Memorial Hall.

Victoria nodded.

"You already searched for eighteen years without any success. Do you think this time will be any different with the same method?" Vera asked.

"Vivienne's child very likely doesn't have a spatial affinity. Thus, looking for a twenty-year-old child with a space-attribute detector is impossible. Furthermore, we don't know how much time has passed since the fire of life rekindled."

"As such, Vivienne's child could be anywhere. Heck, that child might not even be in the Black Rose Kingdom anymore," Vera added.

"I'm aware of that issue, Third Sister," Victoria acknowledged with a nod before saying, "But no matter what, Vivienne's child is also my grandchild, a direct descendent carrying the blood of the Caelestis family."

"My search will not end until the child is found and brought home to where that child belongs. Perhaps it's also a blessing that Vivienne's child didn't inherit her spatial affinity at birth," Victoria sighed with mixed feelings.

She was partly disappointed that her fourth daughter's child wasn't born with spatial affinity. But at the same time, she was also glad because the child might have been able to survive the outside world thanks to that exact reason.

Not all descendants of the Caelestis bloodline necessarily have to possess a spatial affinity.

However, it was still rare not to inherit it at birth.

After all, there weren't many families with a stronger elemental bloodline than the Caelestis family's spatial bloodline.

As such, Victoria still held onto a small glimmer of hope that the family's spatial attribute detector malfunctioned or it was simply too old and outdated to detect the spatial affinity in her lost grandchild.

Of course, there was also another possibility as to why she failed to find her missing grandchild, even after eighteen years of searching before her grandchild's fire of life suddenly extinguished – the search range was simply too small.

While it was improbable, it wasn't impossible.

It could be that she had missed her missing grandchild every time by searching in the wrong place at the wrong time.

However, there wasn't much she could have done about that.

It was too dangerous for her family, and she would have also brought danger upon her missing grandchild if she had expanded her search. After all, people who wanted them dead would definitely start looking for her missing grandchild as well, and only on a much grander scale.

"Well, I won't stop you, Second Sister. However, you must remember – safety first," Vera reminded solemnly.

"Don't worry, Third Sister. I have a feeling this time will go well," Victoria assured before convincing herself, "This time, I will find my grandchild for sure."

Although it was a mystery why an extinguished fire of life could be rekindled, that was not important.

Her lost grandchild was still alive – that was the most important.

"Right... You have 'that' now," Vera remembered.

Victoria had an obsession with finding her missing grandchild. That led her to develop a Rank 5 Detection Tool that could detect all members with the blood of the Caelestis family and spatial affinity within a ten-kilometer radius.

Although she failed to complete the magic tool before her grandchild's fire of life was extinguished, she was given another chance to finally use it and make up for one of her life's regrets.

"Can I also—?"

"No."

Valerie's request to join her grandmother's trip was quickly denied before she could finish asking. As such, she pouted unhappily.

Nevertheless, she didn't dwell on it.

After all, they already had this conversation regarding her permission to venture outside. She already knew the answer but still wanted to try her luck again.

That said, having listened in on her two grandmothers' conversation, she finally learned the meaning behind the small fire on life inside her Fourth Aunt's Soul Lamp.

Since the person was only one year older than her, which was very close to her age compared to everyone else, she quickly developed a strong curiosity toward this cousin, whom she suddenly had and never met.

'I wonder if my cousin outside is a boy or a girl?' Valerie silently wondered.

She also wondered what her cousin looked like and what kind of person her cousin had become growing up outside the territory.

If her cousin was a girl, they could become best friends.

But if it was a boy...

'Well, I'll have to see what he's like first,' Valerie thought. They couldn't be friends if her cousin were a perverted man.

While Valerie was having her own thoughts, Victoria had already bid her farewell to Vera before ripping open the space.

'Wait for me, my grandchild. I will definitely find you and bring you home this time!' Victoria vowed as she slipped inside the ripped space and disappeared.

Without parents or the family's support, her grandchild would have suffered a lot while growing up outside the territory.

Even now, her grandchild must still be suffering!