

## The Witch 631

Chapter 631: Leaving No Room for Doubts

Vaan couldn't help but laugh in his heart.

He didn't expect Elder Yorem to be so bold and decisive in making such a large promise. If he wanted, he could request Elder Yorem to become his backer in the Martial Hall.

However, actually doing so would lower Elder Yorem's opinion of him and hurt their relationship. As such, he couldn't do that. Building up their relationship was more beneficial to his plans.

Nevertheless, Vaan still had to make some adjustments to his plan due to Elder Yorem's promise.

After all, Elder Yorem's promise was guaranteed to be his.

Meanwhile, Acharon's smugness grew as Elder Yorem picked a random book off the shelf to test Vaan's martial knowledge. He couldn't wait to see Elder Yorem reveal Vaan's pathetic lie.

How dare he boast such an obvious lie? Did he think learning martial arts was as easy as breathing?

"Revolving Gale Palm, huh?" Elder Yorem checked the name before flipping open the mid-rank palm art manual, which was only a few dozen pages long, and reading through it.

A normal person would take at least an hour to finish reading it, three to seven days to memorize it, and an average of three months to master it. The content wasn't detailed compared to most martial manuals or scriptures, making it slightly harder to master.

However, the concept was simple. As such, the Revolving Gale Palm was considered moderately difficult. It was not too hard and easy to learn; it was just right to test someone.

"Since you claimed you already read through all these martial books, why don't you tell me what this Revolving Gale Palm is about?" Elder Yorem casually quizzed Vaan with a vague sense of expectation.

"Understood, Elder Yorem," Vaan acknowledged.

"The Revolving Gale Palm is a mid-rank palm art with the concept of utilizing the air to lock one's opponent briefly in place, making it impossible for them to evade the follow-up palm strike. The air-locking force is generated by a particular set of air-weaving with one's hand."

"If a martial warrior relies on pure strength and speed to execute this palm art, the destructive power of the palm strike would still be strong, but its original wind aspect would have limited effect against an opponent of the same level."

Bam!

As Vaan explained the intricacy of the Revolving Gale Palm, he casually provided a demonstration by striking out after weaving the air. The air crackled like lightning the moment he thrust his palm. It almost seemed like he broke the sound barrier in that instant.

Nevertheless, although the air current was invisible, everyone nearby felt the powerful gust that swirled around his palm. It wasn't a strong suction force to those facing it, but it existed.

"The true strength of this palm art can only be realized with the addition of aura. Without aura, it's just a strong palm and not a real Revolving Gale Palm," Vaan nonchalantly added.

Elder Yorem and the nearby martial students were dumbfounded by Vaan's demonstration. They forgot about the testing and froze in a state of awe.

Many of them had either seen or tried to learn the Revolving Gale Palm before. However, none of them had seen an aura-less Revolving Gale Palm like Vaan's. The wind effect, although still too weak to be effective, was much stronger than any other aura-less Revolving Gale Palm known to them.

That was still the Revolving Gale Palm?

According to the martial manual of the palm art, that was definitely what a Revolving Gale Palm should look like! It was a Revolving Gale Palm that had been executed perfectly!

Only someone who spent twenty years mastering this palm art could possibly replicate such a feat!

But who on earth would be willing to spend twenty years just to master a mere mid-rank palm art to perfection?

Berucha wondered if Vaan secretly had webbed fingers or not.

After all, how could he be so good at catching the wind with his hand otherwise? Moreover, did all martial arts look this pretty when mastered to the zenith?

It was like a work of art – simply beautiful.

Unwittingly, Vaan's casual demonstration inspired multiple martial students to learn the Revolving Gale Palm. They wanted to be able to execute a flawless Revolving Gale Palm just like his.

Meanwhile, Arachon's expression turned ugly.

Unexpectedly, Vaan truly knew something about the Revolving Gale Palm and even executed it flawlessly. Perhaps he really was genuine about martial arts and had already learned all the martial knowledge in this book section.

But if that was true, Duke Zaahir's faction possessing such amazing talent was not good for Duke Gamliel's faction.

Vaan could become a huge threat to them.

But before Acharon could think about the future, he had to worry about himself. He didn't know what kind of request Vaan would make to Elder Yorem.

What if he ended up banned from the Martial Arts Repository instead? After all, he did try to get the other person banned from it. Thus, there was a possibility of the person returning tit for tat.

"That was an amazing Revolving Gale Palm indeed. However, it's not enough," Elder Yorem said before picking out a different martial art from the bookshelf, seemingly unsatisfied.

However, Elder Yorem's dissatisfaction had nothing to do with the authenticity of Vaan's claim in question. In his heart, he had already completely believed Vaan's claim. Even so, he still wanted to see if Vaan had also perfected any other martial art.

After testing Vaan on a mid-rank fist art, finger art, and movement art, Elder Yorem and the nearby martial students, who had grown into a crowd of sixty, were completely in awe of his talents, especially Elder Yorem.

Elder Yorem was excited to see such a peerless talent join the Martial Hall. Still, he had to keep up his image.

"Ahem, the truth has been laid bare before everyone's eyes. There's no more room for doubts. You have certainly proven yourself, Martial Student Vanderlin," Elder Yorem solemnly confirmed before saying, "And so, I will honor my promise. Speak. What kind of request do you want to make?"

"I wonder..." Vaan softly muttered, inadvertently looking in Acharon's direction with a vague smile, causing the latter's heart to tense with a bad feeling.

However, just when everyone thought Vaan would get his revenge, he made a rather normal yet unexpected request, surprising everyone.

Chapter 632: I'm Actually Very Poor

"I hope Elder Yorem can ensure no one else bothers me while I am reading in the Martial Arts Repository," Vaan requested before adding, "I don't want my reading time to be disturbed. The waste of time hinders my progress."

Having grown to appreciate Vaan's talent, Elder Yorem would definitely agree. Anyone who tried to stop such a peerless genius from growing would be an enemy of his.

However, Elder Yorem also felt Vaan's request wasn't selfish enough.

"Are you sure this is what you want?" Elder Yorem frowned before quickly adding, "If you want, you can be more selfish, you know? With your background and talent, I doubt anyone will continue to bother your reading here."

"How about I take care of this kid for you?" Elder Yorem directed a stern gaze at Acharon, causing the latter to feel weak in the knees.

Naturally, Elder Yorem only implied he would ban Acharon from the Martial Arts Repository. He didn't have the authority to execute a martial student arbitrarily, nor did Acharon do anything bad enough to warrant death.

However, Elder Yorem's oppressive pressure still made Acharon scared for his life, which wasn't surprising.

After all, Acharon was only a Low-level Rank 4 Body Refiner. On the other hand, Elder Yorem was a Half-step Transcendent Body Refiner.

What was a Half-step Transcendent Body Refiner?

It was someone who had successfully taken half a step into the transcendent rank of body refining. If they did not die an untimely death, it was only a matter of time before they fully became a Rank 5 Body Refiner.

"He seems to have a malicious heart. It won't do the Martial Hall any good if this kind of seedling is allowed to grow," Elder Yorem further commented, fully taking Vaan's side by making Acharon a villain and scaring him.

Although Acharon wanted to complain, he didn't dare to refute Elder Yorem's words. He didn't even dare to leave, even though he wished to disappear at that very instant.

"Elder Yorem has spoken too seriously," Vaan smiled at the opportunity granted to him.

"The conflict between Senior Martial Brother Acharon and I is just a small conflict between juniors of the younger generation and should be treated as such. Moreover, Senior Martial Brother Acharon was just looking out for his junior martial brothers and sisters."

"So, in my opinion, there's no need to punish Senior Martial Brother Acharon for falsely accusing me and trying to ban me from the Martial Arts Repository," Vaan spoke on Acharon's behalf.

His words made everyone stupefied and confused, especially Acharon.

Since they were opponents from rival factions, it was already surprising that Vaan did not seek revenge against him when he was given the opportunity. And yet, he even spoke up for him. That wasn't something a normal person would do.

Acharon suddenly had mixed feelings.

As a member of Duke Gamliel's faction, he should destroy Vaan to prevent him from threatening his lord's goals. But as a person, he could not bring himself to hate Vaan.

Acharon sighed at the fact that Vaan did not belong to Duke Gamliel's faction. Otherwise, he believed they could become friends.

"Oh?" Elder Yorem was impressed by Vaan's open-heartedness and smiled, "Since you have said that much, I won't pursue this matter."

"However, there are some things this old man would like to say. This old man doesn't care about the politics outside the Martial Hall. Still, I should remind you that you and Martial Student Acharon are from different opposing factions."

"As long as your two factions continue to clash, you will keep facing each other. Today, you can spare him. But tomorrow, he might not spare you. It would be best to remember that," Elder Yorem advised.

"Thank you for your concern, Elder Yorem," Vaan sincerely replied before arguing, "However, you have spoken too seriously again. There are no eternal allies and no perpetual enemies. As long as interests align, even enemies can become friends."

"And I prefer to make friends instead of enemies," Vaan added with a devious smile while facing Elder Yorem, but his words seemed to be for someone else's ears.

When Acharon heard that, it was like his brain had lit up like a lightbulb.

'That's right! I can bring this person from Duke Zaahir's faction to our side! Due to the lord's suppressive tactics, Duke Zaahir's domain hasn't been doing too well in recent years. As such, Duke Zaahir shouldn't have much to offer this talented young man. We can definitely offer better.'

Acharon was enlightened.

Nevertheless, since the matter was settled, Elder Yorem dismissed the crowd of martial students, telling them not to bother Vaan as he made good on his promise.

Since Vaan had already decided, Elder Yorem didn't try to persuade him and soon returned to his supervising seat.

"Thank you, Junior Martial Brother Vanderlin. You have done me a great favor," Acharon sighed before suggesting, "If possible, I would invite you to have a meal. We may have gotten off on the wrong foot, but we can start over."

"I believe we can get along well. What do you think, Junior Martial Brother Vanderlin?" Acharon asked.

Vaan also sighed, seemingly exaggeratedly, as if he had gotten a huge stone off his back, and said emotionally, "If Senior Martial Brother Acharon doesn't look down on this little brother, I, too, believe we can get along very, very well."

"Nonsense!" Acharon barked with false anger, seemingly displeased, and said, "Regardless of your background or status, I admire your character, and that's enough. I can look down on anyone but not you, Junior Martial Brother Vanderlin."

"Hearing that makes me feel relieved," Vaan sighed again before saying without shame, "You see, I am actually very poor...so poor that even though Duke Zaahir gave me a priceless pill like the Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill, I don't dare use it on myself."

"Haiz..." Vaan further sighed before mentioning, "Since Senior Martial Brother Acharon is from Duke Gamliel's faction, I wonder if you have a connection to anyone wealthy. It would be great if I could find a wealthy buyer who can offer a good price for this pill... Haiz..."

Acharon's mind blanked for a moment before he blinked several times, straightened his back, and clasped his hands together with a friendly, almost servile smile.

"T-This little brother... What did you say you wanted to sell again?" Acharon carefully asked with his best attitude.

If Acharon's attitude towards Vaan had not yet gone through a hundred and eighty degrees turn before, then it definitely did now.

Chapter 633: Inviting a Wolf Home

"Hm? It's the Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill, Senior Martial Brother Acharon. You didn't mishear."

Once Acharon heard Vaan's confirmation, his eyes widened with disbelief. He couldn't believe what he was hearing.

Every Rank 3 Body Refiner and above dreamed of getting their hands on a single Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill. However, not only did Vaan have one, but he was actually selling it.

'I can't believe I'm the first to hear this! Did such an opportunity really just fall into my lap?!' Acharon wanted to scream with joy.

However, Acharon knew he still had to maintain his image, lest he scared the opportunity away.

Wouldn't it be most tragic if such an opportunity slipped through his fingers?

"Ahem," Acharon cleared his throat and looked seemingly calm before suggesting, "How about I buy it off, Junior Martial Brother Vanderlin? You may not know this, but my Evron family is quite wealthy. If you want to sell it to my family, we definitely won't let you suffer a loss."

"Hmm...really?" Vaan appeared to hesitate before mentioning, "I think I should also say this, but I am not interested in merely mana stones, Senior Martial Brother Acharon."

"I am more interested in rare herbs and ores or heavenly elixirs. You know, the miraculous yet natural stuff that is hard to find between heaven and earth and can be used to augment our physique and improve our training."

"I'm not sure if Senior Martial Brother Acharon's family has a lot of this stuff?" Vaan asked carefully.

Acharon quickly smiled after realizing Vaan's intention.

Compared to consuming the Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill to promote his strength quickly, Vaan preferred the equivalent value in alternative cultivation resources. A warrior would only make the same choice as Vaan if he were broke, completely confident in his martial talent, or both.

The amount of cultivation resources in equivalent value would definitely help one advance further in cultivation than a single Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill. The only disadvantages were the time it would take to achieve and the risk of bottlenecks.

A bottleneck with no hope of ever overcoming was equivalent to reaching the end of one's martial road. As such, heaven-defying pills capable of promoting one's cultivation were so desirable to warriors with poor talent.

But to a true genius, heaven-defying pills were not necessarily a good thing.

After all, if one had to rely on external help to overcome every trial, one would not be able to advance very far in their cultivation, especially when external help became ineffective.

"Hahaha! I'm glad you asked me, Junior Martial Brother Vanderlin!" Acharon laughed heartily and patted his chest. "You're looking in the place. Although my Evron family isn't one of the top ten families in the empire, we are quite close."

"We definitely have plenty of this good stuff stored away in our treasury for the talented future generations of our family," Acharon confidently claimed.

"Haiz... the treasury of a big, wealthy family..." Vaan sighed emotionally before seemingly muttering to himself, "I wonder when a poor person like me will have the eye-opening experience of seeing one...?"

"If you want, today can be that lucky day, Junior Martial Brother Vanderlin!" Acharon's eyes beamed before he excitedly said, "It will also be more convenient to let you pick what you like in exchange for your Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill if you could see what our treasury has."

"How about it? Do you want to return home with me? As long as I get my father's permission, I can show you around," Acharon promised expectantly.

"This...doesn't seem appropriate, right? After all, I'm just an outsider... How could I look into the private collection of your noble family, Senior Martial Brother Acharon?" Vaan asked doubtfully.

Acharon immediately looked stern and said, "Junior Martial Brother Vanderlin, I will get mad if you speak like that, okay? What outsider? If you are willing to sell your Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill to our Evron family, then you are a friend. How can the friend of our Evron family be an outsider?"

"This... Alright, if you insist," Vaan eventually agreed.

"Awesome!" Acharon exclaimed with joy before asking, "Shall we go now?"

"About that..." Vaan reluctantly glanced at the endless books in the Martial Arts Repository and said, "I haven't read enough today."

"Ah... Is that so? Haha... No rush, no rush... A genius like Junior Martial Brother Vanderlin ought to read more and learn more," Acharon replied with a smile.

Although Acharon was slightly disappointed, he didn't want to displease Vaan and risk the latter changing his mind.

"Take this, Junior Martial Brother Vanderlin," Acharon warmly handed a white crystal token with a unique Evron family crest to Vaan and said, "This is my identity token. If you show this to the Evron family guards and tell them you are my friend, they will let you inside our estate."

"I will go back first and seek my father's permission. You can visit our Evron family's estate whenever you finish your business and feel like coming over, alright?"

"Don't worry, Senior Martial Brother Acharon. I won't make you wait too long. I should be done with today's reading by dinner time," Vaan assured with a smile before promising, "I'll visit the Evron family's estate then."

"Hahaha, good! In that case, we'll prepare a warm reception and await your visit, Junior Martial Brother Vanderlin!" Acharon laughed heartily before adding, "You might be unfamiliar with the way to my home, so I will leave one of my men here to escort you later."

"That is fine with you, right?" Acharon checked.

"Thank you, Senior Martial Brother Acharon," Vaan confirmed.

Shortly after, Acharon immediately instructed one of his personal bodyguards, a ninety-year-old High-level Rank 4 Body Refiner, to stay back, "Sir Terach, please protect my friend and make sure no one bothers his precious reading time."

"Understood, Young Master," Terach obeyed as his eyes flickered with understanding.

Although it seemed like Acharon made the decision because he was concerned for Vaan's safety and quiet reading time, it was actually to keep other faction members from approaching Vaan.

Moments later, Acharon left with his remaining men.

#### Chapter 634: Inviting a Wolf Home (2)

The whole interaction had been witnessed and overheard by Berucha, who quietly observed on the side. He couldn't help but feel anxious, terrified, confused, and doubtful at the same time.

Berucha was greatly shocked when Vaan's words seemed to imply he would betray Duke Zaahir's faction and join Duke Gamliel's faction.

However, he also found it understandable.

After all, joining Duke Gamliel's faction had more benefits, not to mention a better living environment, than Duke Zaahir's faction. If Berucha could join Duke Gamliel's faction, he wouldn't have turned to Vaan and Duke Gamliel's faction.

Nevertheless, it took great courage to betray Duke Zaahir. Traitors who earned Duke Zaahir's wrath would undoubtedly die a terrible death once they fell into his hands.

Berucha would lose his backer and return to a mediocre life if something happened to Vaan. As such, he was anxious and terrified.

However, at the same time, something made him very confused and doubtful.

Through the interaction between Vaan and Acharon, they had clearly smiled at each other like they were bosom friends.

Why, then, did he feel like something was really wrong here?

What was the problem?

Berucha was puzzled and couldn't figure out the reason for such a bad feeling. Even so, he could only keep it to himself. He didn't want to spread any seed of doubt and affect his young master's plan.

In the Martial Hall, Berucha was considered Vaan's senior martial brother by right of his longer membership period. However, he had already viewed Vaan as his boss and young master since he decided to be under him.

Since his young master had no instruction for him, Berucha quietly returned to his original spot and stayed outside of his business.

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Meanwhile, Vaan resumed his eye-catching behavior as he quickly read through the martial knowledge stored on the seventh floor. The more martial arts and cultivation methods he acquired, the more certain he was of their origins.

This was especially so for some of the aura cultivation methods.

'As expected, if I compare the first part of Empyrean Scarletsea's True Divinity-level cultivation method and some of these aura cultivation methods, there are some similarities,' Vaan mused.

However, similarities were all there was to it; they weren't the same.

Even so, it showed traces of the aura cultivation methods being altered versions of some spirit energy cultivation methods, and that was enough to prove a Reincarnator or Ancient Soul was responsible for the Great Ratholos Empire's advanced martial development.

While Vaan was reading, several martial students wanted to ask him for guidance due to his outstanding demonstration of martial arts earlier.

He had become a martial arts guru in the eyes of these martial students.

Unfortunately, no one dared to approach Vaan due to Elder Yorem and Terach's presence. Their fierce glares were more than enough to scare away anyone who had the thought of disturbing him.

Time quickly passed by, and nighttime eventually arrived.

Vaan finished his last book and returned it to its shelf, knowing it was time to visit the Evron family. The books in the Martial Arts Repository were something he could read, but visiting the Evron family required special timing.

There was a reason why he preferred nighttime – it was easier to cause confusion and panic.

"I'm done here. Can you take me to the Evron family's home, Sir Terach?"

"Of course, Young Master Vanderlin. You are my young master's friend, and my young master has given me clear instructions to guide you there."

...

Sometime later, Vaan left with Terach, exiting the Martial Arts Repository and leaving the martial school grounds.

Even at night, the streets in the imperial capital were bustling with activities. In fact, they were even more busy and boisterous than during the day. The imperial capital was livier at night due to the cooler weather.

Nevertheless, Vaan and Terach made it safely to the Evron family's huge estate, thirty kilometers east of the Martial Hall's main school.

It was closer to the Eastern Sea and was considered part of the super-wealthy district.

"Let us through. I have brought Eldest Young Master's friend, Young Master Vanderlin, per his instruction. He also carries the Eldest Young Master's identity token as proof."

"This is indeed Eldest Young Master's identity token. Please enter, Sir Terach and Young Master Vanderlin."

"Quickly notify the Eldest Young Master and tell him Young Master Vanderlin has arrived!"

"Yes, Sir!"

The process of entering the Evron family's estate went smoothly thanks to Terach's guarantee and Acharon's identity token.

However, the entrance guards had also been informed of Vaan's visit. Thus, there was little room for error of judgment on the entrance guards' part in possibly shooin away Acharon's respected guest.

Nevertheless, Terach did not follow Vaan after passing the entrance. He headed in a different direction with a serious look after instructing the guards to be on alert.

However, Vaan did find this surprising.

After all, they had been secretly followed by others since they left the Martial Arts Repository. Vaan had discovered this much earlier than Terach but saw no reason to tell the latter anything.

"Stay vigilant and keep an eye out for enemies! There could be trouble tonight!" a guard's rough voice resounded in the distance.

Meanwhile, Vaan continued to be guided to the main residence of the Evron family by a female servant who had the natural endowment to become a talented witch but never had the opportunity to learn magic and grow.

"Hahaha! If it isn't my good friend, Young Master Vanderlin! I'm glad you made it!" Acharon burst out of the main residence, taking large steps and laughing heartily with excitement.

A burden in his heart was lifted when Acharon finally saw Vaan.

Since Vaan had safely arrived at his home, Acharon believed his family would definitely acquire the Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill from him. Acharon was that confident in his family's treasury.

"I apologize if my attire is not up to your family's standards, Young Master Acharon," Vaan mentioned, still wearing his worn-out travel clothes and carrying his backpack. "I came as soon as I finished my reading."

"You don't have to worry about that, Young Master Vanderlin. We don't put too much importance on one's attire around the house," Acharon assured before saying, "More importantly, I have received my father's permission to let you take a look inside our treasury."

"Would you like to see it now or dine with us first, Young Master Vanderlin?" Acharon inquired.

Although it was dinner time, Acharon hoped Vaan would pick the first option. He couldn't wait to get his hands on the Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill. After all, Acharon was the eldest young master of the family.

Thus, the priceless pill would most likely go to him.

Chapter 635: Deep-Sea Steel

Vaan calmly smiled at Acharon's hidden anxiety before replying, "Young Master Acharon seems more eager to show me around your treasury, so why don't we do that first?"

"Sure, sure, of course! Right this way, Young Master Vanderlin!" Acharon's eyes beamed as he gestured for Vaan to follow him.

Previously, Acharon referred to Vaan as Junior Martial Brother Vanderlin back in the Martial Hall. But now, he called him Young Master Vanderlin. It showed Acharon held Vaan in higher esteem and viewed him as someone of equal standing.

However, this surface respect was only shown due to Acharon's fear of making a mistake in the process of winning Vaan over to their side.

Acharon quickly led Vaan around to the main residence's backyard, where a big metal warehouse was found. Several Low-level Rank 4 Body Refiners guarded the vicinity. Their strength wasn't too high, but the security seemed tight, nonetheless.

Evidently, even for the Evron family, guards of Sir Terach's level were considered a minority. Still, it shouldn't be surprising for the eldest young master and heir to the Evron family to have at least one or two such High-level Rank 4 Body Refiners or warriors with equivalent combat power.

When Acharon expressed his intent to enter the warehouse with Vaan, the guards quickly pulled up the large rolling shutters and let the two through.

Almost immediately, a plethora of herbs, minerals, magic tools, miscellaneous ancient relics, and piles of mana stones entered Vaan's sight. Each category of items was separately and neatly placed in its own sections.

Alas, none of these items entered Vaan's sight – they were all low-quality.

Vaan knew these items were only for display and weren't truly valuable items hoarded by the Evron family. Just as he expected, Acharon led him to the center, where he inserted a special crystal key into an empty socket on the ground.

The hidden magic mechanism in place was activated as a result, and a secret passage leading underground was revealed.

"Don't worry about the stuff here. Our family's real treasury lies underneath," Acharon explained, fearing Vaan might doubt their wealth.

Before the secret passage was opened, Vaan's Omni-Sense actually failed to penetrate the ground. Surprisingly, the Evron family installed something capable of blocking divine senses.

Nevertheless, Vaan was shocked once he detected the content within the Evron family's treasury.

Although there were a few minerals he had hoped and suspected to see from the treasury of a wealthy family near the sea, he was still shocked when he actually saw the minerals, nonetheless.

Among the various rare herbs and minerals found inside the Evron family's treasure was a large amount of refined silvery-white metal sealed inside thick glass containers.

This particular silvery-white metal couldn't be found no matter where Vaan looked in the Black Rose Kingdom or Holy Knight Empire. However, it could be found inside the treasury of a wealthy family that lived near the Eastern Sea.

Since the continent of Pangea was the body of an enormous dragon, it should have been expected that it wouldn't have every earthly mineral, even if it had many other minerals that didn't exist back on Earth.

This silvery-white metal couldn't be found on the continent of Pangea, but it was not necessarily the same for the planet itself. They were originally two different things.

Nevertheless, Vaan didn't expect just the Evron family to be in possession of such a large amount of this silvery-white mineral. There were at least fifty tonnes in the treasury. Moreover, they were all in their refined silvery-white state.

Uranium was its name – the key mineral Vaan needed to create a god-killing, powerful weapon that harnessed the true power of the sun.

No, theoretically, the peak energy output of nuclear weapons could produce terrifying temperatures that even surpass the sun's multiple times!

The flames of his current Fire Law simply paled in comparison to a big nuclear bomb.

Vaan didn't want to bring nuclear weapons into the world due to its devastating effects. However, he needed trump cards he could have to guard against divine-level threats like the seven Great Devils of Gehenna.

Of course, Vaan could have created uranium for his nuclear weapon through Earth Transmutation. However, such a method wasn't permanent. Moreover, his earth spirit's mana capacity limited the amount he could produce.

Using an unstable method to play around with an unstable mineral was the peak of stupidity. It was not reliable.

As long as Vaan could secure enough uranium and produce his nuclear weapons, he would no longer feel as pressured by the existence of the seven Great Devils. The illusory Sword of Damocles that hung over the heads of humanity would also cease to exist.

By then, if the seven Great Devils really pushed him with the threat of death and slavery, Vaan wouldn't mind giving them a taste of humanity's greatest achievement from his past life.

With nuclear weapons, even mortals could slay divine beings.

It was the power of science.

But what was science? It was just knowledge of any kind.

Increasing that knowledge was called the cultivation of wisdom – something that all sentient beings could utilize, and nuclear weapons were just the result of humanity's collective cultivation of wisdom.

"Young Master Vanderlin seems to be curious about our collection of refined Deep-Sea Steel," Acharon commented with a smile as if he could understand the reason behind Vaan's curiosity.

"Deep-Sea Steel is a highly toxic metal that has been banned for hundreds of years and doesn't appear anywhere on the market or in books. Unfortunately, it's also the one thing we can't sell to you."

"Even if we do, you won't be able to take it away. The empire will hunt you down if they find out you are in possession of Deep-Sea Steel, and our Evron family will also be implicated," Acharon explained.

Vaan quickly understood he had never heard of Deep-Sea Steel; it was a strictly controlled mineral.

However, what made him speechless was Pangea's name for uranium.

What the hell was Deep-Sea Steel? Steel that could only be found at the bottom of the sea? Did that even make any sense? How could solid uranium exist in water, let alone deep seawater?

The anoxic water in the deep sea coming into contact with uranium would produce a highly exothermic reaction.

Suddenly, Vaan realized why the seawater in the outer sea regions was toxic. Furthermore, it wasn't just toxic; it was radioactive.

Vaan's lips twitched.

#### Chapter 636: Acharon's Gratitude

After Vaan calmed down and rethought the matter on Deep-Sea Steel, he quickly realized it was possible for solid uranium to exist at the bottom of the sea.

It was general knowledge that the planet of Pangea was mostly covered in water.

However, the planet of Pangea wasn't necessarily a water planet at the very beginning of time. Water could have been something that came after, like how water came to Earth and brought life.

As such, it was quite possible that the surface of the planet was originally filled with uranium and the introduction of water that came after brought a cataclysmic change, transforming it into a toxic water planet.

However, such an event would have happened long before the Golden Dragon Pangea descended upon this world.

'Even if there used to be radioactive uranium at the bottom of the sea, it should be nonradioactive lead now. However, that also means there's possibly more uranium buried under this layer of lead,' Vaan mused.

He could guess how the Great Ratholos Empire procured their Deep-Sea Steel and what sort of consequences it produced that forced it to ban the mineral and cover its traces. He couldn't help but applaud the Great Ratholos Empire for its forward-thinking.

The destructiveness of radioactive uranium wasn't something mortals could handle, and the world wasn't ready for it.

Vaan shook his head and replied with a smile, "Don't worry, Young Master Acharon. I'm not interested in items that can't help me train."

"That's a relief," Acharon relaxed with a soft sigh before introducing the upcoming items, "The Deep-Sea Steel is a no-go, but what do you think about these High-rank Jadenfire Crystals? If you can find the supplementing herbs, you can use them to cultivate the Jadenfire Body."

"These Jadenfire Crystals are not bad. It's a pity that some of them are damaged, leaking their innate essence and lowering their quality. Do you have the supplementing herbs, Young Master Acharon?"

"Erm..."

"No? Ah, I see. That's unfortunate too... Haiz..."

"Hahaha... How about these Calmsea Golden Jades, Young Master Vanderlin? You can use them with a high-rank earth flame to practice the high-rank body-refining method, Indestructible Golden Body Method, to forge a body as tough as Threefold-Refined Tungsten. If you can master it, no one below Transcendent will be able to hurt you."

"Oh, these Calmsea Golden Jades are really not bad. But, alas... a high-rank earth flame is too rare to find and even harder to possess. Without the Indestructible Golden Body Method, it's also useless. I just joined the Martial Hall; I don't have anywhere near enough contribution points to exchange for it. Haiz..."

...

Acharon continued introducing rare and precious minerals to Vaan, but the latter sighed and lamented with disappointment, listing reasons why he wasn't interested in them each time.

It was also precisely because Acharon couldn't refute Vaan's reasoning that he wanted to cry.

'If we had everything, do you think these precious items would just be rotting in the treasury instead of being used to cultivate a new talent for the family?!' Acharon complained in his mind but didn't dare to say out loud.

Shortly after, Acharon left the precious mineral section and guided Vaan to the rare herb section.

'Surely, this punk will be interested in our collection of rare herbs at least, right?' Acharon silently prayed.

"What do you think of this Eight-Petal Iceheart Flower, Young Master Vanderlin? This is a key ingredient for the Rank 3 Iceheart Perseverance Pill, which can protect your body from breaking down as you temper your body with fire-base body-refining methods."

"Eight-Petal Iceheart Flower? Haiz..." Vaan sighed again, gripping Acharon's heart.

"This Eight-Petal Iceheart Flower's quality is pretty good... It's just unfortunate that it was harvested thirty years too early. Otherwise, it would have become a Nine-Petal Iceheart Flower. Perhaps a Rank 4 Iceheart Perseverance Pill could have been produced from such a rare herb then. Haiz..."

"Ugh... What about..."

"Haiz..."

"This one would definitely satisfy..."

"Haiz..."

...

No matter what Acharon introduced, Vaan would always find some reasonable excuse to express his disappointment. It happened so frequently that even Acharon started to think all the rare herbs and minerals in his family's treasury were trash.

After all, rare herbs and minerals that couldn't be used were useless.

Right?

Unwittingly, by the time Acharon finished touring Vaan through the treasury and returned to the flight of stairs leading out, his eyes were reddened from straining, and his hair was disheveled from excessive scratching and pulling.

It looked like Acharon had suddenly aged an extra fifty years.

He seemed so stressed that he would gladly smoke any tobacco offered to him without a second thought, even though he never got into that stuff.

"This is so embarrassing. I'm apologizing for showing you such a disappointing treasury, Young Master Vanderlin," Acharon said dejectedly with his head hanging down.

Acharon didn't even want to look back at his family's treasury, lest he felt repulsed.

Not only did Vaan make Acharon feel like sh\*t about his family's wealth, which the latter was originally proud of, he even got the latter to apologize for it.

What was gaslighting? This was gaslighting!

"Don't worry about it, Young Master Acharon," Vaan warmly assured like a caring friend before offering some words of hope to lift his mood, "This is not necessarily a bad thing."

"What do you mean, Young Master Vanderlin?" Acharon asked doubtfully.

"You see, even if I managed to find some things I like in your family's treasury and sold my Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill to you, it wouldn't be a good thing for your family's standing in Duke Gamliel's faction," Vaan calmly mentioned.

"Think about it. If Duke Gamliel learned someone was selling a Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill, but one of his people kept the matter a secret to purchase the pill for yourself, Duke Gamliel would not be happy."

"And if the Evron family fell out of Duke Gamliel's good grace, it's hard to say what others in the ducal faction would do to your family to please Duke Gamliel," Vaan stated.

Acharon immediately broke into cold sweats as he imagined the potential future. Such a situation could possibly doom his family.

"Thank you, Young Master Vanderlin. You have helped my family avert a possible disaster by telling me all this," Acharon said gratefully as he closed the entrance to the treasury on their way out.

When that happened, Vaan's Omni-Sense was cut off from the treasury.

However, Vaan already had a complete understanding of the entire treasury's layout and positioning in his mind. As such, he opened a spatial portal that covered the treasury's entire ground and sank everything into his Heaven-Swallowing space.

The entire treasury was swiped clean in an instant.

Even the shiny tiles that fitted the whole floor weren't spared from Vaan's looting. As a result, the glamorous treasury was instantly transformed into an empty stone chamber.

"Don't mention it. Isn't this what friends are for?"

Vaan smiled shamelessly after taking everything from the treasury seamlessly without the other party's knowledge.

If Acharon had known what had actually happened, he probably would have puked blood in anger.

'What f\*cking friend? I have never seen a black-hearted friend like you! You swiped generations of my family's accumulated wealth clean! F\*ck! Even the pretty specks of dust in the room were probably taken by you too, huh?!' was something Acharon probably would have also said.

Chapter 637: Surprise Attack

'Friends...'

After hearing Vaan mention the word, Acharon suddenly felt guilty. He couldn't believe he tried to destroy his martial future by getting him banned from the Martial Arts Repository.

Fortunately, the situation didn't escalate to that point.

"Young Master Vanderlin, I'm glad to have a friend like you," Acharon sincerely said before seeking his help, "In your opinion, do you think my family is safe since we haven't completed the transaction?"

"Not necessarily, Young Master Acharon," Vaan calmly replied.

At the same time, he silently thought, 'Your family isn't safe because I just robbed your treasury clean... You can escape the disaster of wealth but not the disaster of poverty...'

In truth, the Evron family wouldn't face the threat of bankruptcy or decline even though their treasury had been robbed clean. It still had its surface-level wealth and various businesses. The loss of wealth only stopped the Evron family from growing and expanding; it wouldn't force the Evron family into decline and ruin.

In other words, the Evron family's development would simply stagnate for the following dozens of years as the Evron family re-accumulated its wealth.

"Oh? What kind of other danger is there?" Acharon asked with a startled look.

"On my way here, I was obviously followed by several different parties, Young Master Acharon. It's quite clear that news of my Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill and my visit to your family had been leaked. As such, even if we hadn't completed the transaction, others would still know that I came to sell the Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill to your family.

And if others knew of this matter, Duke Gamliel would likely know too."

"Ahh..."

Acharon felt pained in his heart after listening to Vaan's reasoning. His father had been the one who secretly leaked the news in hopes of it reaching Duke Zaahir's faction.

This was a devious move to cut off Vaan's path of retreat and forcefully bring him over to Duke Gamliel's side. After all, Vaan couldn't go back to Duke Zaahir's faction if the other party believed he was a traitor.

Acharon didn't expect that this move from his father would backfire on them.

Karma was certainly a bitch.

"Of course, we just have to make it seem like that wasn't the case," Vaan continued.

"Instead, we should make others believe I just came to befriend Young Master Acharon, and we hit it off. And since I was looking for a buyer, you intended to introduce me to Duke Gamliel the next day. Duke Gamliel would get a Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill and a promising young talent in his faction."

"Then, if I speak a few good words about you, Young Master Acharon will get all the credit. By then, Duke Gamliel will be impressed, and your Evron family's standing in the faction will surely rise," Vaan spoke eloquently.

Acharon felt his blood pumping with excitement just by listening to Vaan speak. He could simply imagine his family's glorious future.

"Hahaha!" Acharon suddenly burst into laughter and wrapped one of his arms around Vaan's shoulders like a bosom friend. "Shall we go and eat now, Young Master Vanderlin?"

Acharon was a bit slow-witted, but he eventually understood how to make the spies think Vaan had just come to the Evron family to make friends; they just needed a happy meal together.

"Sure," Vaan smiled.

Alas, the Evron family's estate was bound to be anything but quiet and peaceful that night.

Vaan made his way back to the front of the main residence and entered the building with Acharon, meeting the rest of his family in the Dining Hall. Everyone was full of smiles and more receptive to Vaan after Acharon briefed his father, Beru Evron, on their previous discussion.

The family welcomed Vaan to the table with warm smiles and made small talk, avoiding sensitive and heavy topics. It truly seemed like they wanted to befriend Vaan and had no ulterior motives.

But as Vaan returned the friendly gesture to the Evron family and seemed very amicable to everyone, he secretly gave his dragons a surprising order.

'Shoot a Thunderfire Breath Spell at the main residence's left wing. Make sure I am caught within the blast radius, Fraegar.'

'Huh? How can I do such a thing, Supreme Leader? I don't want to hurt you...'

'You're looking down on me if you think your Thunderfire Breath Spell can hurt me, Fraegar.'

'Ah, I wouldn't dare, Supreme Leader!'

Fraegar, one of the few female Rank 5 True Dragons, hesitated and panicked. But under Vaan's coercion and assurance, she eventually followed his order.

At that moment, Acharon and his family were still happily chatting when...

Boom!

Something struck the main residence and exploded, tearing the building's left wing apart. Broken bricks and shattered wood flew along with the expanding blast wave.

The Evron family had no time to guess the source of the loud explosion when the right wall of their Dining Hall blew apart.

It just so happened that Vaan and Acharon were the closest to that side. As such, they were blown away together by the blast wave. The heat from the blast wave also scorched their clothes, making Vaan look particularly miserable and pathetic.

However, it was also something Vaan had desired – to look like the attack had targeted him but slightly missed.

"Hmph!"

Beru Evron stomped the ground furiously and shielded everyone else with his Aura Lord-level aura. He caught Acharon and Vaan shortly after. Once he made sure no one was hurt, his anger finally erupted in full.

"Who dares to attack my Evron family?!" Beru thundered violently.

His voice resounded throughout the estate and beyond, shaking up the whole neighborhood. Everyone was shocked, but not by his earth-shaking voice.

It was against the law to fight within the imperial capital. Whoever attacked the Evron family's estate must be tired of living!

The alarmed members living inside the Evron family's estate quickly evacuated their residences with weapons drawn to face the unknown enemy. However, no matter where they searched, they couldn't find the culprit.

"Anyone hurt?" Beru checked the casualties with a gloomy look.

"No one died, but our guest..."

Despite the surprise attack destroying the main residence's left wing, no one died from the explosion. Only a few servants suffered light injuries.

Beru and the others turned to Vaan and looked at his poor state. They immediately felt disgraced and humiliated. A guest was harmed in their home and under their watch.

"Are you alright, Young Master Vanderlin?" Beru asked.

"Definitely not. Half my clothes had been destroyed," Vaan slightly complained about his damaged cheap clothes, which wasn't really a loss, before saying, "Fortunately, that was the extent of the damage. It could have been a lot worse."

"Haiz, I don't know what I would do if my Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill got destroyed too," Vaan sighed emotionally, seemingly speaking without thought.

However, the expression of the head of the Evron family and everyone else changed instantly, becoming more grave. It was like they had realized the purpose behind the surprise attack.

Whoever attacked them was clearly targeting Young Master Vanderlin and the Rank 4 Body Reformation Pill!

"Stay close, Young Master Vanderlin. We don't know if the enemy is still around," Beru stated while scanning the surroundings vigilantly.

Although Beru seemed to have cooled down, he was still burning furiously inside. The enemy had no respect for the Evron family or the imperial law and made the Evron family lose face in front of their guest!

How could the dignified Beru not be furious?

Meanwhile, Acharon, standing beside Vaan, looked a little depressed. After all, he had also been caught in the blast and had parts of his clothes burned. And yet, he didn't receive the slightest concern from his father.

Nevertheless, it was just a passing feeling. Acharon wasn't at the age where he would sulk over a little matter. He understood his father's position and his concern for the whole Evron family.

Acharon would only receive his father's concern if he were seriously injured.

Suddenly, another attack descended.

This time, everyone in the Evron family sensed the incoming attack as they were outside in the open. Even so, they noticed a bit late, leaving them with little time to react.

"Incoming attack—!" Beru roared.

Boom!

A beam of reddish-yellow light descended from the sky and struck the ground forty meters away from Vaan. The concentrated power erupted immediately upon impact, blasting outward in all directions.

The second attack had also been instructed by Vaan.

Vaan went through the motion of guarding himself against the incoming blast wave, but he wasn't serious about blocking. That was because someone else stepped forward for him.

"You dare?!"

Beru was livid as he shot past Vaan and shielded everyone from the incoming blast with his aura again.

"Show yourself if you dare! How dare you offend my Evron family twice! Face me, you coward!" Beru barked at the dark, cloudy skies.

However, no one emerged from the dark clouds in the skies despite Beru's repeated calling. Vaan had already instructed Fraegar to go into hiding after the second attack.

Two attacks were enough to make him the clear target of the attacks.

There was no room for doubts.

The first attack had destroyed half his clothes and backpack, spilling out its contents with nothing to hide.

Thus, even if the Evron family found out their treasury had been robbed later, they would never suspect it was Vaan's handiwork. He was clearly the victim. He had nowhere to hide all that treasure.

So how could he steal their entire treasury from right under their noses?

The Evron family would think the thief could be anyone but Vaan.

Chapter 638: Red Dragon Tribe's Changes

"Which bastard dares to attack my Evron family and not themselves?! Come out, you coward!"

"Do you think I won't find you if you hide in the sky?! I know you're hiding up there! Show yourself!"

"Goddamned vermin! This Lord is truly infuriated!"

"Ready my wyvern! This Lord will pull the snake out of the sky!"

After Beru's furious shouts failed to provoke the unknown enemy out of hiding, he lost his patience and called for his wyvern. A large red wyvern with wingspans of over thirty meters soon flew from the wyvern nest in the imperial capital, and before long, Beru took to the skies.

However, the head of the Evron family did not charge into the skies alone. He went with two accompanying wyvern riders from his family.

Another two dozen other wyvern riders also flew over from different directions. Half of them belonged to the imperial family alone, and the rest came from various families affiliated with the Evron family and Duke Gamliel.

They had all come to assist the imperial wyvern riders in apprehending the culprit who dared to defy imperial law and disturb the peace of the imperial capital.

"Lord Beru, do you have any idea who the lawbreaker could be?" the leader of the imperial wyvern rider group gravely inquired.

"Thank you for coming, Lord Perez," Beru first expressed his gratitude before shaking his head with helpless anger, "I have no idea who it is, but I would also like to know who this daring bastard is!"

"Then, let us be quick, lest this lawbreaker escapes!"

"Yes, Lord Perez!"

Within moments, the over two dozen wyvern riders disappeared into the thick, dark clouds in search of the culprit.

Meanwhile, Vaan followed Acharon to a dressing room to change out of their damaged gear and adorn new sets of clothes. Vaan was given a fresh look and no longer had the appearance of a travel-torn warrior. In his new noble desert attire, he seemed more like a local person of nobility.

Acharon nodded with approval at Vaan's new look and gifted another two sets of similar styles.

"When a member of Duke Gamliel's faction is presented to the public, they don't just represent themselves but also Duke Gamliel. Only clothes of this style are more fitting for Young Master Vanderlin to wear," Acharon commented.

"My father and the imperial wyvern riders will handle the matter outside, so there's no need for us to be involved. However, I also think it's dangerous for you to leave tonight, Young Master Vanderlin. Stay here; my Evron family will guarantee your safety for the time being."

"We can visit Duke Gamliel's estate tomorrow together," Acharon said.

Vaan had no opinion and nodded.

Under Vaan's request, a private chamber where he could train without getting disturbed was arranged for him instead of a normal resting room.

"Young Master Vanderlin sure is diligent. No wonder you can become a Rank 4 Body Refiner at such an age," Acharon commented, impressed by Vaan's intention to train in such a situation instead of resting.

"I have no other choice. The poor can only work hard to achieve something," Vaan smiled before saying, "If there's nothing else, I will see you tomorrow morning, Young Master Acharon."

"Yes, yes, Young Master Vanderlin. My guards will ensure no one comes to disturb your training," Acharon stated.

"Mm. Thank you, Young Master Acharon."

"It's no big deal."

Shortly after Acharon left, Vaan sealed the heavy stone door and inspected the interior of the underground training chamber, which was one of many used by members of the Evron family for extended secluded training.

The isolated training chamber was spacious, with a cubic dimension of thirty meters on each side. Besides simple reinforcement-type magic arrays, there were no other hidden magic arrays or hexes.

The possibility of spying inside was erased.

Nevertheless, Vaan asked Fraegar to deploy some anti-detection and detection spells in the area for him. That way, no one could spy inside the chamber, and Fraegar would also know when someone was approaching.

Of course, Vaan could detect approaching presences with his Omni-Sense. However, he didn't intend to stay for long.

'Did you have any trouble losing your pursuers, Fraegar?'

'Not at all, Supreme Leader. These humans had no means of seeing through my rank-five stealth spell, not even when I was only ten meters away from them.'

'More importantly, the magic security of this human city is rather lacking compared to the previous cities, Supreme Leader. This imperial capital has almost no protection against magical attacks, except for a few important structures and buildings.'

'There's nothing to be surprised about. This country is focused on physical development. Given the enormous demand for mana stones to fuel their physical training facilities, there wouldn't be much room left for magical defenses and the like, Fraegar. However, that also makes things easier for us to infiltrate and carry out our plans.'

'Right. It's astonishing how far humans have advanced in this physical aspect. Some of the strongest humans in this country can even contend with me,' Fraegar thought.

However, Fraegar was only comparing their physical prowess. Even the emperor might not necessarily be her match if her powerful magic was included. After all, dragon magic was her forte.

'We'll leave it there for now. Watch over this place for me, and notify me if someone comes. I'll be leaving temporarily, Fraegar.'

'Understood, Supreme Leader.'

'Connect me to the Red Dragon Tribe now.'

'Yes, Supreme Leader.'

Shortly after Fraegar opened the spatial portal, Vaan stepped inside and returned to the Red Dragon Tribe's First Peak.

In an instant, Vaan's presence was felt by every dragon in the vicinity.

They were all descendants of the Fire Dragon God and also tempered themselves in the Fire Dragon God's flesh and blood. As such, their connection to Vaan, who embodied the Fire Dragon God after absorbing the soul of the Fire Dragon God, was quite strong.

"Supreme Leader!"

The nearby red dragons immediately dropped their activities and offered their utmost respects to Vaan's return with a little excitement.

"At ease," Vaan commanded the red dragons to return to their work and pay him no mind as he inspected the Nine Peaks.

The Nine Peaks of the Red Dragon Tribe had undergone a visible transformation since the last time he had visited it. Due to the huge demand for magic tools and various components for the space station and space gates, the Nine Peaks had become one big metallurgy site.

From left to right, machinery could be found everywhere.

The red dragons didn't have enough workforce to keep up with the production demand. Thus, they created self-autonomous magic puppets and machines to carry simple productions for them. As a result, production rates skyrocketed.

Several dozen mountains within the Thousand Fog Mountains had already turned into mining sites due to their rich minerals.

The entire Thousand Fog Mountains could be considered the Red Dragon Tribe's territory. But it was only now that the Red Dragon Tribe was finally making use of all its territory.

The Magma Wyrms, which served under the Red Dragon Tribe, had been practically turned into miners to salvage rare and precious minerals. Its main tasks were drilling underground passageways, gobbling up all the rare and precious minerals in its path, and spitting them back out at the tribe.

Vaan wasn't sure if there were enough minerals in the Thousand Fog Mountains to carry his large projects.

However, the Dragon Mountain Range west of the Thousand Fog Mountains was likely richer in minerals, not to mention the Red Dragon Tribe was also outsourcing minerals from the Black Rose Kingdom and Holy Knight Empire. Thus, there was no need for concerns regarding a mineral shortage.

In one section of the First Peak, Vaan found the core production of the dragon space helmets. Seeing a few dragons testing their new designs for faulty parts, he found the scene quite comical.

His very existence was altering the course of history.

Nevertheless, Vaan had to credit the red dragons for their innovation. The basic blueprint he had given them had been improved by leaps and bounds.

The current dragon space helmet used a type of living glass material, which could be freely adjusted in shape and size. It only took a single press of the button to remove or add the glass protection.

It also seemed the red dragons preferred something closer to a skin-tight fit instead of the original and simple round dome design.

'I guess they don't like looking like balloon heads,' Vaan thought with amusement. He had no issue with the change of design; he preferred functionality over appearances.

"Supreme Leader, welcome back!" Astarot, Lord of the First Peak, arrived to welcome Vaan as soon as he sensed his arrival.

One by one, the other dragon lords also arrived from the Land of Fire, including Narvim and Khaleesi. Each of their aura had become stronger than before, especially the first three dragon lords.

Astarot, Irmoss, and Sondrei had all stabilized their powerful dragon bodies in the early stages of the Demigod rank. They had been at the peak of Rank 5 for so long. Now that they had precious herbs, fire spirits, and the blood essence of the Fire Dragon God, their potential was unleashed.

With their Demigod-rank dragon bodies, their magic capacity had also vastly increased. The stronger their bodies, the more magical power they could accommodate.

Vaan was satisfied with their growth.

No matter how impressive the Gear Ratholos Empire was, he still commanded the greatest military force in Pangea.

"Let's head to the Dragon Summit for a meeting. There's something I want to discuss with all of you."

"Yes, Supreme Leader!" the nine dragon lords answered in unison.

Chapter 639: The Dragon Lords' Guesses

Red Dragon Tribe, Dragon Summit

The nine dragon lords congregated on the land mass floating above First Peak, but none rested on their dragon throne in Vaan's presence. They also didn't want their eye level to be higher than Vaan's if given a choice.

Thanks to the increased fire affinity and Fire Spirit Body, they were able to manipulate their bodies to an extent. As such, they reduced their sizes by one-third, increasing their body density and making them sturdier and more powerful.

However, the nine dragon lords were huge legendary creatures, to begin with. Thus, even with a one-third reduction in body size, they were still much bigger than Vaan.

Vaan never cared for such dragon etiquette, nor did it make any sense to him. It wasn't reasonable to make dragons lower their eye level than a human's.

"Alright, stop fussing around and take your seats. I have something important to discuss," Vaan urged.

Once his words were said, none of the nine dragon lords dawdled with indecision and hesitation.

"What is this important matter you want to discuss with us, Supreme Leader?" Astarot inquired.

"During my trip..." Vaan recounted Empyrean Scarletsea's story about the almighty foreign invaders and the general level of True Divinity.

Then, he mentioned his doubts regarding the high frequency of reincarnated beings on Pangea and his speculation on the destruction of countless worlds, which was most likely connected to Empyrean Scarletsea's story.

"It's like that," Vaan summarised before asking, "What do the dragon lords make of this? Does anyone know why these almighty foreign invaders appeared in this chaosverse or why they are destroying everything?"

"This..."

Astarot and the other eight dragon lords were greatly startled by Vaan's information and looked at each other with dismay and horror. They could also see the graveness in each other's eyes.

"Lord Narvim, of the nine of us, you are the most knowledgeable on the subject of our homeworld, Chaos," Astarot mentioned before requesting, "Please share with us your thoughts on this topic."

"Very well," Narvim acknowledged with a solemn look and a heavy heart. His gaze revealed his inner turmoil and doubts, but it was also clear he had some ideas or guesses. Still, he took a moment to contemplate where to start.

"I think everyone already knows Chaos has existed for a very long time, a hundred and twenty-eight chaos cycles to be exact, according to some sources. At the end of each chaos cycle, a new chaosverse inevitably becomes a part of Chaos. Then, a new chaos cycle starts."

Narvim's brief yet concise summary of Chaos's history received the nods of every other dragon lord present.

"However, not every new chaosverse entering Chaos is dominated by intelligent life. There are many reasons, such as overwhelming natural disasters and tribulations, for why the native intelligent life failed to achieve their peak evolution and dominate their chaosverse."

"But regardless of the reasons, once an ungoverned chaosverse enters Chaos, it would undoubtedly become a part of the Wilderness," Narvim stated.

"What is this Wilderness, Lord Narvim?" Vaan asked with curiosity.

"The Wilderness refers to a collective group of ungovernable chaosverses due to extremely powerful non-intelligent lifeforms, which were allowed uncontrolled growth when their chaosverses merged with Chaos, Supreme Leader," Narvim patiently answered.

The Wilderness was most likely overrun with non-intelligent lifeforms or lifeforms of lesser intelligence. Furthermore, while intelligent life in the Wilderness wasn't necessarily extinct, they were mostly primitives.

Any intelligent life or civilization that failed to achieve the level of interstellar travel and leave their home planets was considered primitive.

As such, by that definition, the current humans on Pangea were all primitives in the eyes of Chaos.

Vaan gradually understood how Gehenna viewed Pangea.

Since Pangea was considered primitive, Gehenna did not need to treat it equally. All of Pangea's resources were free to plunder, and all its life was theirs to enslave or destroy. Pangea had no right because it was primitive; it didn't have a divine-level protector.

Yet, Pangea had not been overrun by Gehenna.

Vaan originally thought it was due to the Fire Dragon God, as the Red Dragon Tribe had believed. However, one Fire Dragon God wasn't enough to deter all seven Great Devils.

He also suspected it had something to do with Golden Dragon Pangea, but he couldn't be sure either.

Crucial information was still lacking.

"Do you know how many chaosverses have become parts of the Wilderness, Lord Narvim?"

"I don't, unfortunately, Supreme Leader. Denizens of Chaos at our level don't have access to the latest news since we have only explored a very small, infinitesimal part of Chaos. It wouldn't be strange if any news we hear is already several dozens of chaos cycles old."

"I see..."

"However, I do know that during the era when the Lord of Chaos was still weak and young, there were only thirty-three chaosverses in Chaos, and twenty-one of them were part of the Wilderness then. So, using that as a reference, I would assume around eighty chaosverses are part of the Wilderness now."

Vaan's lips twitched after hearing Narvim's guestimation.

Unexpectedly, even with someone as powerful as the Lord of Chaos ruling over Chaos, there were still so many existing wild chaosverses.

Perhaps the Lord of Chaos didn't care about the conquest of wild chaosverses?

"So, when I heard about the Supreme Leader's information, it had me wondering if some higher-level divine beings invaded this chaosverse to plunder resources," Narvim stated.

"It's reasonable to think of that," Vaan calmly nodded.

Indeed, since wild chaosverses were extremely powerful, targeting a weak chaosverse with an incomplete chaos cycle seemed like a matter of course if one wanted to acquire easier resources.

"However, this possibility has one major flaw – the power of the foreign invaders that destroyed Empyrean Scarletsea's Divine Realm," Vaan mentioned.

"That's right, Supreme Leader," Narvim did not deny the fact and even wholeheartedly agreed.

"This is also the part that confuses me after hearing about the power structure of the Divine Realm."

"A being that could become eternal in this chaosverse is far stronger than an eternal being from Chaos. And a being that could even surpass eternity would put them on the same level as the Lord of Chaos."

"However, the Lord of Chaos does not need to plunder the resources of any chaosverse. That's because if the Lord of Chaos wished for it, he could create any chaosverse and acquire any kind of resource he desired. His existence itself is something that has already transcended the very definition of existence as we know it. Well, at least, that was what I read."

"But moving forward, based on your description of the foreign invaders, none of them should be the Lord of Chaos. After all, the Lord of Chaos is of human origins, while these foreign invaders... Well, I don't know what they are either, to be honest."

"But if these foreign invaders are level on the same level as the Lord of Chaos, then it also doesn't seem like they are from Chaos. After all, they didn't come to plunder resources from this chaosverse. Instead, they are destroying everything – that goes the will of the Lord of Chaos," Narvim stated.

"If they are not from Chaos, then where could they come from?" Vaan frowned with puzzlement.

However, his question also puzzled the nine dragon lords. That was something they all wanted to know as well.

They did not know it was possible for anything to exist outside of chaosverses and Chaos. After all, beyond the boundary was only nothingness. Anyone or anything that entered the endless sea of nihilism would be reduced to nothing.

"Perhaps these foreign invaders come from the Wilderness?" Khaleesi made a wild guess, even though she had no basis for it.

But apart from the Wilderness, which could possibly account for more than eighty unexplored wild chaosverses, she could not think of anywhere else that could accommodate such powerful destruction-seeking unknown beings.

"That seems possible. Not much is known about the Wilderness. It could have all kinds of flora and fauna, even natural disasters, which Chaos had never seen before," Astarot added with a worrisome expression.

Many dragon lords were bothered by the fact there were Beyond True Divinity-level existences on the loose, seeking the destruction of everything in their wake.

However, their Supreme Leader's doubt regarding the frequent reincarnation in Pangea raised one very important question – how much of the chaosverse had already been destroyed?

"If Beyond True Divinity-level existences have been going around destroying all life for billions of years, I wonder how much of this chaosverse is still left?" Sixth Peak Lord Tyvrin asked.

A heavy mood suffused the entire Dragon Summit.

No one knew the answer, but they were all certain the chaosverse's time was quickly ticking. If the foreign invaders visited their world, it would instantly become a region of death. No one would have time to flee from a Beyond True Divinity-level attack.

Fleeing to Chaos seemed like their only option for salvation.

They had to raise their power quickly.

"What's with the heavy atmosphere? Given how barren this world is, I doubt those higher-level beings would know if there's any life here. Moreover, there are so many stars in the night sky. Isn't that a good indication that many worlds still exist?" Kemun with a baffled look.

However, Vaan could only smile wryly at his question.

Even if a star died, they wouldn't know about it right away. For example, a star dying over a thousand light-years away would also take exactly a thousand light-years before anyone on Pangea saw its light disappear from the night sky.

As such, using the stars in the night sky to measure the chaosverse's remaining life was not very reliable.

On another note, Kemun's words made Vaan realize something.

Chapter 640: It's Not Easy Being the Master of the Household

One part of Kemun's words really stuck to Vaan like glue. It was something he had thought about before but wasn't sure. After all, it was just one among many possibilities he thought of based on limited information.

But now that he had more information, this possibility had increased greatly and couldn't be ignored.

According to Emphyrean Scarletsea, spirit energy was a fundamental element of life. Where there was life, there would also be spirit energy. One did not exist without the other. Vaan had also learned that an unknown force was devouring all the spirit and divine energy in the world.

That was why it seemed like spirit energy had never existed.

This fundamental energy, which cultivators from the Divine Realm used to advance to the peak of life, was robbed from Pangeans, preventing their growth and development in the field of spirit energy.

Although Vaan was aware of the happening, he never figured out its purpose. But now, he had a strong hunch the spirit energy was withdrawn to hide the planet's life potential from the foreign invaders.

Following this train of thought, the foreign invaders didn't necessarily seek to destroy all life, only life above a certain level. The foreign invaders didn't seek complete destruction but a reset, like pruning overgrown trees.

The more Vaan thought about it, the more he felt this was likely the case.

However, only time will tell if his guess was correct.

...

"Our future doesn't look good, Supreme Leader. Not only do we face threats from the other side, but we also face threats from this side. The threat on this side isn't something we can resist," Astarot said with a heavy expression.

Beyond True Divinity-level threat was something almost no one could overcome even if they had all the time in the world to train. Of the countless lives in Chaos, the number of beings who possessed the qualifications to reach such a level of existence was probably no more than a handful.

If this unnatural disaster visited them, there was really nothing they could do to stop it. They were just mere specks of dust in front of such existences.

"Our future look certainly looks grim," Vaan admitted with a nod before suddenly adding, "But it isn't without hope."

"If those foreign invaders come for our world, only death awaits us. That's an unstoppable disaster, so let us not worry about it. Because even if we worry about it, there's nothing we can do to stop it. We can only focus our efforts on Gehenna."

"Compared to an unstoppable disaster, Gehenna's threat is something we still have hope in overcoming," Vaan said, pulling out a piece of refined uranium from his Heaven-Swallowing Space.

The unknown block of metal quickly attracted the attention of the nine dragon lords. They stared at it with both curiosity and wariness. They weren't sure what it was, but they could sense the danger in it.

"Supreme Leader, this is..."

"Deep-Sea Steel, according to people from the Great Ratholos Empire. It's a restricted mineral with no public information. You can say a good friend gifted me all of his family's Deep-Sea Steel, and it could be considered my greatest gain during my trip thus far."

"What do you intend to do with this kind of item, Supreme Leader?" Third Peak Lord Sondrei inquired, adding apprehensively, "I can feel harmful elements emanating from this thing..."

"I know everyone already has their hands full with the current ongoing projects. However, this Deep-Sea Steel will be our main priority from now on," Vaan announced as he glanced at the dragon lords' astonished looks.

"You might be wondering why this Deep-Sea Steel is so important. Well, I don't mind letting you all know this material can let us slay divine beings once we weaponize it."

What?!

Vaan's claim quickly shocked the dragon lords silly.

Although they all sensed some level of danger from the small block of metal, they didn't expect it to have the potential to slay divine beings.

How was that even possible? Such a small block of metal possessed such power?

Seeing the dragon lords in doubt, Vaan casually smiled before explaining the theory of nuclear fission and creating nuclear power from uranium. Shortly after, he drafted a detailed blueprint for a nuclear missile and stressed the importance of safety precautions at each step.

The more dragon lords comprehended about nuclear power, the more astonished they became.

"The power of the sun... If we can really create such a weapon, the destructive power should be enough even to kill an initial Rank 7 Divine Being," Astarot commented with amazement before quickly frowning, "However, this kind of nuclear weapon has one fatal weakness – speed."

Vaan nodded at the flaw Astarot pointed out.

Even if they managed to clear a nuclear weapon with rank-seven destructive power, it didn't have the same level of speed to match. Everything would be for nothing if the nuclear weapon failed to strike its target.

After all, Rank 6 Divine Beings and above wouldn't just wait to be hit by such a slow-moving projectile. In fact, such powerful beings could even have various means to dismantle nuclear weapons and render them useless before their destructive power could be activated.

But as long as they could put the Rank 6 Divine Beings or above in a situation where they could not evade or stop the nuclear weapons, then the nuclear weapons were guaranteed to take their lives.

Vaan was well aware of the weakness of nuclear weapons and had the ability to make up for their weakness. But to improve his success, he needed to strengthen his comprehension of the Spatial Law.

It just so happened that he knew a few good spots to comprehend the Spatial Law.

"What are we still waiting for? Let us study this blueprint and produce the nuclear weapon right away!" Kemun urged everyone in a jovial mood after having his hope ignited. "The sooner we have these nuclear weapons, the sooner we have something that could guard against the seven Great Devils!"

"Lord Kemun is right. I will also be here to guide you through the production process," Vaan solemnly stated.

Although he trusted the dragon lords' abilities, the knowledge of nuclear power was quite complex and involved many steps. It would be a great loss if the entire Red Dragon Tribe got turned into a nuclear wasteland due to a single misstep.

Nevertheless, Vaan didn't intend to use uranium to create nuclear weapons solely. Nuclear weapons just took priority due to his lack of trump cards.

The usefulness of uranium extended far beyond nuclear warfare.

As long as Vaan could discover a stable source of uranium, building a few nuclear reactors was a must for producing large volumes of electrical power. A nuclear-powered space station would greatly ease the burden on mana consumption.

He was also interested in exploring the compatibility between electrical and magical power and the fusion of science and magic.

However, that was something he would have to leave for another time.

Although Vaan was long aware of it, he was once again reminded of the convenience of magic. With the dragon lords' mastery of magic, the process of building nuclear warheads sped up by countless folds.

It only took two hours to build a simple fifty-kilogram nuclear warhead from scratch.

However, this fifty-kilogram nuclear warhead was still incomplete. It only had the form and not the functions. It couldn't be fired on its own, nor would it necessarily achieve the intended nuclear explosion upon impact.

It was still missing core components.

However, Vaan had purposely created a flawed design to leave room for the dragon lords to improve and complete it. Only their runic knowledge could replace the computing component it was missing for remote activation.

Nevertheless, Vaan didn't stick around to see its full completion.

After leaving the rest of his uranium supply for the dragon lords, Vaan departed from the Red Dragon Tribe.

It was the middle of the night, and most people would be resting at this hour, sleeping until morning. But for Vaan, it was bound to be a restless night.

Vaan made a surprise visit to Eniwse, who was at a relatively new branch of the Shadow Witch Order in the southern region of the Holy Knight Empire.

"V-Vaan?" Eniwse gasped in surprise, but her gaze quickly softened with longing.

She had been so busy setting up the Shadow Witch Order to acquire intelligence from the continent that she had not made any time for anything else. But the moment she saw Vaan, she immediately forgot all about it and only had Vaan in her eyes.

Few words were needed between them as they had already established a tacit understanding of the roles they play. They didn't need to explain anything to each other every time.

At the very least, Eniwse didn't need Vaan to explain anything to her; she only needed to keep supporting him and receive his comfort. As such, without saying much, Eniwse had already thrown herself at Vaan. Their clothes quickly disappeared, and the pants and moans of sheer bliss soon followed.

Without bothering to set up a sound-insulation spell, Eniwse's lewd voice escaped her main office. It dumbfounded the hardworking witches in the southern branch as they all turned their gaze to the main office in wonder.

They didn't expect their usual stern and strict leader to make such lewd noises.

But as they listened, their leader's depraved voice started to make their imaginations run wild. The intense stimulation made them hot and short of breath.

'Oh my god, who on earth is so capable of making our usual stern leader sound like such a bitch in heat?' the shadow witches wondered.

The intimate session lasted three hours before Vaan kissed Eniwse farewell and left to look for his other women and satisfy them in the dead of night.

Haiz, it was not easy being the master of the household.