

The Witch 781

Chapter 781: True Nature of Nihilism?

According to Hecate, the peak beings of Chaos wouldn't help the vagabonds reclaim their wild chaosverses because of their respect for the Lord of the Boundless Seas and Skies.

However, given how many had become wild chaosverses, there should have been countless peak beings within these fallen chaosverses.

Did they not possess the power to reclaim their chaosverses? Or did they choose not to out of guilt? Maybe they were also stopped by other peak beings?

Or were the power of the beasts from the wild chaosverses simply stronger?

"Lady Hecate, do you know how powerful the beasts in the Great Wilderness are?" Vaan inquired.

"It seems you have noticed the problem; your mind is indeed sharp," Hecate acknowledged with a smile before saying, "You've guessed it, Sir Vaan. Another reason the Great Wilderness remains unreclaimed is indeed because of the strength of the beasts inhabiting it."

"Supposedly, the Great Wilderness used to be a great place for tempering and finding opportunities in the past. However, it also had a degree of danger to the strength of the beasts. After all, some of the strongest beasts in the Great Wilderness are not inferior to cultivators in any way. In some aspects, they even exceed them."

"Many people guessed that beasts in the Great Wilderness were able to grow so powerful because they gave up spiritual evolution for more instinctual evolution to survive in their cruel environment."

"However, everything changed with the repeated deaths of the Lord of the Boundless Seas and Skies's reincarnation. The growth of the beasts went out of control, especially the sea and sky life forms."

"There were rumors that some of the strongest beasts in the Great Wilderness have even surpassed Empyrean Gods, glimpsing into the secret of the Origin Realm," Hecate mentioned.

"Thank you, Lady Hecate. I have learned a lot from you. However, I believe it's about time we return," Vaan suddenly suggested after expressing his gratitude.

"Oh?" Hecate uttered with surprise before asking, "You don't want to collect any more divine energy crystals, Sir Vaan?"

"I've collected more than enough, Lady Hecate. Should I find myself short, I can always seek your help in producing some for my use since I'll be visiting your territory sooner or later," Vaan casually replied.

Hecate suddenly smiled wryly before honestly admitting with a bashful look, "Indeed, divine energy isn't worth much to me, but I may have downplayed the difficulty of converting mana into it a bit..."

"You see, divine energy is the higher form of power from refining spirit energy. In a sense, it would also be on a higher level than mana if we were to compare them as is. If it's only converting mana into spirit energy, I won't have an issue generating an abundance of spirit energy."

"But for divine energy, I'm afraid it will consume a lot more time and effort to create some. So, it's still better for you to collect the divine energy crystals here," Hecate smiled awkwardly.

Vaan quickly understood her meaning.

Although she could indeed convert mana into divine energy, the amount wouldn't be worth her time and effort.

To compare divine energy and mana was like comparing a full box with an empty one. Divine energy contained the concentrated, refined essence of spirit energy. In contrast, the mana ever-present in Chaos was heavily diluted of its existential power.

If one wanted to compare the difference between divine energy and mana, one would have to refine mana to the same level of concentration as divine energy first. Only then would the mana be superior to divine energy.

Otherwise, divine energy was indeed stronger than basic mana.

"Nevertheless, my opinion remains unchanged; I have collected enough divine energy crystals for now, Lady Hecate," Vaan replied before mentioning, "It's unwise to wander around this region too much, lest we stir up a hornet's nest."

"After all, the beings that have destroyed this place could still be around. We definitely won't be able to handle them if they are at the level of planet destroyers," Vaan added.

"You have a point, Sir Vaan. Then, let us leave," Hecate agreed before mentioning, "Nevertheless, I believe I have shown you enough goodwill. I expect you to return the favor on our way back."

Naturally, Vaan understood what Hecate wanted.

Since she had already shared her knowledge, it was his turn to share his. Furthermore, there was only one thing she wanted to learn about more than anything else – the Outer Beings.

"Alright," Vaan nodded.

Shortly after they departed the outer rims of the asteroid field region, Vaan explained the Outer Beings' existence to Hecate and mentioned what he knew about fourth-dimensional beings and the fourth dimension.

Finally, he shared his unbelievable theory on the relationship of their world with the fourth-dimensional world.

By the time they returned to the moon region, Hecate had absorbed all the information Vaan shared. A blank look of awe and wonder hung on her face after she tried to visualize his theory instead of denying its possibility.

As an ardent pursuer of knowledge, Hecate naturally had to keep an open mind to all possibilities. Confirming a new theory's feasibility instead of discrediting it was the proper way of conduct, no matter how outrageous it seemed.

Hecate had to admit Vaan's theory was indeed outrageous, but it was solid and reasonable. She couldn't find any flaw in it, only questionable doubts.

"If Chaos, as a whole, is only considered at the level of blood cells in the fourth-dimensional world, then what do you think is the true nature of the endless sea of nothingness, of nihility, Sir Vaan?" Hecate asked, further adding, "Unlike the void of space within Chaos, this boundless nothingness is highly destructive and absolute."

"It can't just be some empty space in this fourth-dimensional world, right?" Hecate added.

"Since you yourself have mentioned Chaos being on the level of blood cells, then you should also understand what blood cells do in the human body, Lady Hecate," Vaan smiled before continuing, "They aren't stationary and are constantly moving, as part of a great blood flow."

"I believe this endless sea of nothingness could actually be pure energy that may have been extracted from Chaos and countless other possible chaosverses within this great flow."

"However, without the protective membrane of the chaosverses and Chaos, all this pure energy is flowing at fourth-dimensional speed, too fast for us to perceive," Vaan said.

Hecate had not thought of it that way. But when she did, she quickly showed her astonishment.

Chapter 782: Hecate's Enlightenment

An object would become a blur when it moved fast, a faint shadow when it moved faster, and practically invisible when it moved fastest. But no matter how fast the object moved, traces of its existence would still be sensed.

This is due to its interaction with other matter during its movement.

However, Hecate realized that was only true up until a certain speed. The limitations of the third dimension had restricted her thinking.

In the fourth dimension, everything would be far more complex.

Anything and everything would contain so much more information, and the fourth-dimensional beings had to absorb this information instantly to function normally.

After all, when third-dimensional beings see their third-dimensional world, they immediately recognize the sun and moon, heaven and earth, and mountains and rivers. They don't just freeze to process what they are; they see what they see and know what they know.

In that case, the concepts of speed, space, and time had to be quite different to accommodate the complexity of the fourth dimension.

Furthermore, the fourth-dimensional beings would have the perceptive abilities to view that complexity as something simple.

Once Hecate understood that, she didn't try to limit her imagination by the "what is" but tried to understand the "what if" to get an idea of the concept of fourth-dimensional speed.

Nothing could move faster than the speed of light in the third dimension, but moving faster than the speed of light was most likely normal in the fourth dimension.

What kind of effect would fourth-dimensional speed have?

Furthermore, how could something be proven to exist if it moved too fast to be seen or even felt? And if it had always been the case since the beginning of time, how could it ever be known or thought of?

That was the domain of nihility – If people never knew it existed, then it was the same as never existing.

Because third-dimensional beings were simply incapable of perceiving things beyond their dimension, they could never understand anything outside of Chaos, in the endless sea of nothingness.

Having given a different perception of the endless sea of nothingness, Hecate realized it couldn't be true nothingness.

Why would true nothingness have any effect on that which exists? How could the state of nothing do anything?

It was just nothing.

As such, the nihilistic power of the endless sea of nothingness actually came from the seemingly absolute speed of the fourth dimension. The speed was so fast that it would literally shred anything in contact with it from existence.

Furthermore, it couldn't be sensed because its energy particles were much smaller than standard.

That was also why slowly coming into contact with nihilistic power would have the effect of erosion instead of instant disappearance. The quantum particles of it were actually eating away at the matter.

This was also how controlled levels of nihilistic power could break down matter into pure energy instead of smashing everything into non-existence.

Suddenly, the laws around Hecate stirred, prompting Vaan to pause their travel and glance at her with great surprise.

This was because among the laws stirred was also the Nihility Law.

"I seem to have comprehended the Nihility Law... I guess that makes us partners in crime," Hecate chuckled pleasantly, sincerely adding, "You have my thanks, Sir Vaan."

Not only did she comprehend the Nihility Law, but she also had a major breakthrough in her understanding of all other laws. Her ascension to Rank 7 Divine Being was only a matter of time now.

Vaan shook his head and said, "I've only shared my experience and insight, Lady Hecate. Ultimately, it was your ability that allowed you to comprehend nihility."

"Nevertheless, congratulations are in order. How do you feel after rewriting your destiny?" Vana asked shortly after.

"I feel great!" Hecate replied with an honest grin before suddenly adding, "Although the Nihility Law will undoubtedly bring untold dangers to my life, how many beings would even get this chance to pursue the absolute peak?"

"Meeting you has certainly been my greatest blessing and the chance I have been waiting for. For that, I am grateful. As a reminder, please visit my territory as soon as you've settled all your matters—if you want to raise your strength quickly, that is."

"Also, don't be in a hurry to use Abaddon's left arm until then, Sir Vaan," Hecate added.

"I will keep that in mind, Lady Hecate," Vaan nodded.

Now that they were both users of the Nihility Law, Vaan had another layer of assurance on top of the Boundless Sea and Sky Aura's influence to trust Hecate.

After all, their interests aligned, and they would want each other to be as strong as possible to overcome any disaster thrown at them due to their destinies as bearers of nihility.

As such, Vaan was quite curious how Hecate intended to help him raise his strength once he reached her territory.

Nevertheless, that was something he could only find out later.

More importantly, he needed to settle the Great Ratholos Empire and deal with the Vampire Lords and the Evernight Territory.

...

A strange scene unfolded before them when Vaan and Hecate returned to the Great Ratholos Empire's imperial capital.

"What are you doing?" Hecate frowned.

Her nine trusted Dreamcatchers were competing with each other, seeing who could last the longest under the gravitational pressure of the black pillar. Evidently, it was their game to kill time and cure their boredom as they waited.

"M-Mistress! You're back!" Fourth Dream exclaimed with surprise and joy despite being informed of Hecate's imminent return. "W-We are competing."

"I can see that," Hecate's frown deepened.

Her Dreamcatchers were all beautiful fairies, trained to be elegant and gentle but also dignified in the eyes of others as they represented her.

However, at that moment, the nine Dreamcatchers were all soaking in sweat, huffing and puffing like animals in heat. Their ethereal image was completely shattered, making her feel embarrassed.

"Who came up with this idea?" Hecate coldly asked.

The nine Dreamcatchers immediately glanced at the Eighth Progenitor subconsciously, causing the latter to feel weak in the knees, especially after her cool gaze shifted to him.

"P-Please have mercy, Great Devil Hecate! I didn't suggest anything! I'm innocent! I merely made an irresponsible remark!" the Eighth Progenitor quickly cried, fearing Hecate's divine pressure would weigh down on him again.

"Oh? What kind of irresponsible remark? Let's hear it," Hecate demanded.

Chapter 783: Alter Ego

The Eighth Progenitor heavily gulped down his saliva before replying, "I just asked why the nine Dreamcatchers were struggling so much under the gravitational pressure despite possessing superior cultivation to us, Vampire Lords, Great Devil Hecate."

"I didn't mean anything malicious by it! It was just a genuine curiosity! Please believe me!" the Eighth Progenitor pleaded.

Although he received compensation last time after bearing Hecate's divine pressure, he might not be so lucky this time. After all, Hecate couldn't have too many vials of Soul Replenishing Essence.

As such, he was truly afraid of losing more lifespan.

"My deepest apologies, Mistress. I was the one who led everyone to compete under the gravitational pressure," First Dream admitted to her mistake before explaining, "I felt that it was a rare chance to strengthen our divine bodies as we waited for your return."

Hecate was speechless.

The Vampire Lords practiced blood cultivation, which was a mix of energy and body cultivation.

On the other hand, what the Dreamcatchers practiced was soul cultivation exclusively.

As such, it was natural for the Vampire Lords to be superior to them in bearing the gravitational pressure due to their advantage in the body aspect. Furthermore, the Dreamcatchers weren't even using the full might of their soul power to resist the gravitational pressure.

Otherwise, how could they lose to the Vampire Lords when they have higher cultivation?

"That's enough. I won't single any of you out. All of you will reflect on your mistake in the Blizzard Hell Prison for three months when we return," Hecate coolly stated.

"Yes, Mistress!" the nine Dreamcatchers answered simultaneously without a hint of complaint. In fact, they even wanted to smile with glee.

After all, three months in the Blizzard Hell Prison couldn't be considered a punishment to them.

Although the Blizzard Hell Prison was a special cold place for holding criminals and making them suffer from freezing temperatures, it was also a great place to temper the divine soul.

In other words, Hecate was simply sending them to cultivate.

Nevertheless, after Hecate's issue with her Dreamcatchers was settled, she shifted her attention to the Vampire Lords.

Although Vaan had a plan for the Vampire Lords and the Evernight Territory, it seemed Hecate also had her own ideas on the matter. As such, he might as well leave it to her to handle.

After all, with only his power and sway of words, he could settle for a peace treaty between the Great Ratholos Empire and the Evernight Territory at best. He wouldn't be able to assume control of the Evernight Territory.

The Vampire Lords would definitely not agree with it, and he lacked the ability to make them in his present state.

However, it was a different story with Hecate around.

"You wouldn't mind me deciding how to settle the problem between the Great Ratholos Empire and the Evernight Territory, would you, Sir Vaan?" Hecate asked out of courtesy.

"Not at all, Lady Hecate. This is your right as one with power," Vaan calmly replied.

It was natural for the strongest to have the biggest say.

"That's great," Hecate nodded with relief.

For a moment, she was concerned that Vaan would argue with her over it.

After all, no matter how talented Vaan was, he was still far too young. It wouldn't be strange for anyone under such circumstances to develop an inflated ego and become drunk on borrowed power over such a victory.

Fortunately, she did not misjudge him.

Nevertheless, Hecate did not have a single interest in the resources of the Evernight Territory. However, it was also true that Vaan currently lacked the qualifications to possess it.

Even if she agreed to it, the other Great Devils wouldn't. In fact, they were a bigger problem than the Vampire Lords.

"Since Abaddon is dead, the Evernight Territory is left without a Great Devil to manage," Hecate mentioned.

"Furthermore, there isn't a single Vampire Lord qualified to assume the position of Great Devil and rule the Evernight Territory. As such, I will be assuming the position of Evernight Territory's temporary ruler."

"Anyone have a problem with that?" Hecate asked, sweeping her stern gaze across all twelve Vampire Lords present with an intimidating pressure.

In fact, there were only eight Vampire Lords who required her attention.

After all, the Sixth Progenitor, Eleventh Progenitor, and Thirteenth Progenitor had sworn their loyalty to her. That naturally disqualified them since they would be returning to her territory.

On the other hand, Vaan had the Eighth Progenitor's allegiance, as far as she was aware.

As such, only the remaining eighth Vampire Lords could be a problem.

Nevertheless, no one in their right mind would challenge the decision of a Great Devil. Even if the Vampire Lords were reluctant, they would still have to accede.

"No problem," the Vampire Lords simultaneously replied.

"Good!" Hecate nodded before continuing, "However, I am still the Great Devil of the Dreamdust Territory. My time and energy are limited; I can't focus too much on the affairs of the Evernight Territory."

"So, I will appoint a representative to manage it in my stead. Sir Vaan, do you have any candidates in mind?" Hecate asked.

Vaan nodded.

Since Hecate let him make the choice, he naturally had to appoint his people to the position.

"The Eighth Progenitor will be diligent representative for you, Lady Hecate," Vaan mentioned.

"Very well," Hecate nodded and said, "Then you will be my representative, Eighth Progenitor."

"I am honored to receive this opportunity and trust. I will not disappoint you, Great Devil Hecate and my Lord!" the Eighth Progenitor immediately accepted with joy and excitement.

"You better pray you won't," Hecate calmly acknowledged before returning her attention to the rest of the Vampire Lords.

The Vampire Lord suddenly felt nervous due to the tension in the brief silence.

"Now that my representative has been chosen, I will give you my first order as your unofficial ruler: You... you! You! And you! Fuck off! Fuck off! Fuck off!

In fact, all of you scram back to Gehenna for me!"

"Without further word from me, no one is permitted to cross the dimension and enter Pangea! The same is applied the other way around! If you understand, then quickly scram!" Hecate thundered menacingly.

Her sudden intimidation and oppression exploded so abruptly that it shocked everyone. The peaceful atmosphere was instantly drowned in the heavy stench of malice, death, and dread.

It was as if an entirely different person had taken control of Hecate's body.

The Vampire Lords instinctively scurried off in full compliance in that very instant, not daring to look back. Hecate's alter ego frightened the wits out of them.

Even Vaan was dumbfounded with his eyes widened.

Chapter 784: Only Way

It was said that Hecate had three faces – She was sometimes good, sometimes evil, and other times, she was neither.

Although Vaan heard about this, it was still shocking to witness the switch.

It truly was hard to call them the same person.

The previous Hecate was like the personification of goodness; she was always covered in moonlight and holiness. On the other hand, the present one was cloaked in darkness and death.

Vaan felt almost fortunate that he didn't have to deal with Evil Hecate.

Nevertheless, compared to Good Hecate, Evil Hecate seemed more fitting for a Great Devil. Even so, he had not seen her commit any evil. At most, she was only more violent, like Aeliana.

Perhaps this was a property of darkness; it would amplify negative emotions.

"Lady Hecate...?" Vaan uttered.

Hecate immediately directed her menacing glare at him. But in the next moment, her expression changed into a friendly smile. At the same time, her dark, evil aura vanished, replaced by a tranquil and gentle one.

"I'm sorry you had to see such an unsightly side of me, Sir Vaan. However, such a side is sometimes necessary to scare the people into absolute obedience," Hecate said with a wry smile.

But shortly after, she quickly became solemn, mentioning, "There are a few things I need to tell you and some things I have not told you, Sir Vaan."

"As a Peak Demigod, you managed to drive Abaddon to such a pitiful state and also dealt him the finishing blow. In addition to your heaven-defying talent, no one is more qualified than you to replace Abaddon and become the new ruler of the Evernight Territory."

"In due time, you will undoubtedly catch up to his level and be worthy of the seat among the Great Devils. However, it is also true that you currently lack the cultivation and the legitimacy to rule the Evernight Territory. That's why I will help you resolve these two issues once you reach my territory."

"Unfortunately, it cannot be done immediately. That is why I am giving you time to settle all your matters in Pangea before that time comes," Hecate solemnly stated.

"What are the matters you have not told me about, Lady Hecate?" Vaan asked curiously, seeing how Hecate seemed quite serious.

"You see, no matter how much the Great Devils hate each other, we have a rule not to kill each other," Hecate confessed.

"Although you dealt the killing blow, I have undeniably played a part in his death. As such, I will most likely be sanctioned by the other Great Devils once they hear of it. I'll be condemned and questioned upon my return and unable to leave for a while."

"During this time, the Great Devils will likely convene a meeting to determine whether to join hands and eliminate you once and for all. However, I will also do my best to oppose this idea and promote you to becoming one of us."

"As such, ascending to the position of Great Devil and ruling the Evernight Territory is a goal you must work towards and cannot reject for your survival," Hecate solemnly stated.

Vaan was quickly startled by Hecate's information.

Nevertheless, it was something he had already thought about, and as it turned out, he was right to be concerned about it. That said, he had a good feeling Hecate would be able to convince the Great Devils.

Just by her extensive knowledge outside of Gehenna alone, he believed her background was quite grand and impressive.

As such, the other Great Devils would most likely give her some face.

On that note, reaching out to Hecate and making a deal with her was probably the best choice he had ever made; it gave him and Pangea a clear future.

Even so, Vaan couldn't help but suspect the hidden hands of fate had some play in guiding him to this situation.

He couldn't imagine what would happen if Abaddon had not antagonized Hecate first. No, even before that, if the Sacred Tirtha had belonged to another Great Devil other than Hecate, they would not have arrived at this best possible outcome.

There were too many coincidental factors to attribute it all to luck.

Fate itself seemed to have been manipulated. It wasn't the first time Vaan felt this way either.

"It seems this is the only way," Vaan acknowledged the situation he found himself in due to killing Abaddon.

Unless Golden Dragon Pangea was alive and intervened, Pangea simply couldn't withstand the full might of Gehenna.

Thus, how could he survive if it solely focused on him?

Since Vaan couldn't beat all of the Great Devils with his current self, he could only join them – Such was the only way to survive.

Well, more accurately, in this case, it was beating one of them and then joining them.

Although the situation seemed quite serious, Vaan didn't feel the slightest burden. His only responsibility was to grow stronger.

On the other hand, Hecate had most of the work fall on her; she had to convince the Great Devil that Vaan was not a threat to them and was a better asset to Gehenna than Abaddon ever was and will be.

Vaan was strangely confident she would be able to do it.

"For your safety, I will leave behind three Dreamcatchers to protect you. They will also act as your guide to the Dreamdust Territory and mediums for communication between us, Sir Vaan," Hecate stated.

"So generous?" Vaan smiled.

Hecate gave him a side-eye glance and said, "They may be much older than you, but in terms of experience and maturity, they are more likely to be inferior to you. Think of them as cultivation hermits who have yet to see much of the world, Sir Vaan."

"As such, three is the minimum number required for me to trust they will do their job well," Hecate stated before adding, "Also, try not to bully them too much."

"How could I have such courage, Lady Hecate?" Vaan smiled sheepishly.

"Yet, you have the courage to challenge a Great Devil at the peak of Rank 6 Divine Realm on your own? Do you even know how outrageous that is to others?" Hecate replied lazily, not buying it.

"The circumstances were different..." Vaan scratched his cheeks ruefully.

Hecate rolled her eyes.

Chapter 785: Dynamic Trio

Shortly after, Hecate shifted her attention to the Dreamcatchers, asking, "I need three of you to stay back and guard Sir Vaan's safety with your life. Any volunteers?"

"Those who volunteer will be exempted from punishment when we return," Hecate stated.

Surprisingly, none of the nine Dreamcatchers were really to volunteer.

"Mistress, I'd rather return to the territory and cultivate—Er, I mean accept my punishment," Fourth Dream voiced shyly.

"Same here, Mistress. This place is not as good as home," Ninth Dream chimed as her gaze wandered around.

Although much of the area had collapsed from battles, she could see that the buildings in the distance weren't as developed or visually appealing. The same would undoubtedly apply to other things.

How could she enjoy staying in an underdeveloped world?

"I bet the food here wouldn't be great either, Mistress. I prefer to go home," the gluttonous Seventh Dream added after careful consideration.

Given the low levels of mana and backward development of magic, she concluded the Great Ratholos Empire lacked the knowledge to produce high-quality ingredients and mouth-watering food.

Staying in Pangea would be a greater punishment than enduring the frigid cold of the Blizzard Hell Prison.

Clap, clap!

Hecate casually clapped, saying, "Great, I'm glad to see three enthusiastic volunteers. Fourth Dream, Seventh Dream, and Ninth Dream – You three will stay back. The rest of you will follow me back."

"Er.... Mistress?"

"You got something to add, Fourth Dream?"

"N-No..."

Fourth Dream's shoulders drooped in defeat, knowing she couldn't go against Hecate's decision. She could only blame herself for being too eager to voice an opinion.

Seventh Dream and Ninth Dream also felt shattered after understanding they had to stay back.

"Protect Sir Vaan well and serve him like how you would serve me. He is someone I treat with the highest regard. Who knows, you might find some fortuitous opportunities following Sir Vaan during this period," Hecate left some words of consolation for the three Dreamcatchers.

However, they didn't seem convinced.

Shortly after, Fourth Dream, Seventh Dream, Ninth Dream watched Hecate and the other Dreamcatchers leave with envious gazes.

Nevertheless, after Hecate and the others left, the three Dreamcatchers immediately fixed their attitude and turned to Vaan.

"Sir Vaan, please feel free to call out to us when you need us and be assured that no harm will befall you with us three around. We will protect you diligently in secret," Fourth Dream stated, adding, "You can call me Fourth Dream."

"I am Seventh Dream, Sir Vaan. Please call me whenever you have good food to share—Ack!" Seventh Dream was suddenly whacked on the head by Fourth Dream.

"Quit messing around," Fourth Dream said sternly.

"Fine..." Seventh Dream replied sulkily.

"I'm called Ninth Dream, Sir Vaan," Ninth Dream introduced herself before briefly pausing, gazing at the desolated area.

"I don't ask for much. I only hope you will treat us like civilized beings and provide us a place to stay, even if it is just a shed with hay to lay on..."

"Also, I prefer to work from evening to morning hours... So, please try not to call for me during after morning to evening hours..." Ninth Dream requested, seemingly pitifully.

"I'll try to keep that in mind, Lady Ninth Dream. Don't worry about sleeping in a shed with hay. We're not savages," Vaan assured with a smile, amused by the group of three.

One was a glutton, and the other was a night owl. Only Fourth Dream seemed to be the sensible one among them.

"Time to work," Fourth Dream stated.

Shortly after she grabbed Seventh Dream and Ninth Dream, they all disappeared from sight instantly.

However, Vaan could still see them moving to a less conspicuous spot despite being invisible to everyone else. Nothing could be hidden from his Fourth Dimension Sense.

It seemed the three Dreamcatchers intended to guard him from the dark and draw attention to themselves. No doubt, they had noticed they stood out a lot with their pairs of beautiful black wings, not to mention they themselves were pretty like fabled elves.

'Although they are reluctant, it seems they follow Hecate's orders quite faithfully—Uh...'

Just when Vaan felt some respect for the three Dreamcatchers, he saw the most serious one, Fourth Dream, taking out a packet of playing cards and distributing the cards to the other two.

"..."

Vaan was speechless.

It had not even been a few minutes since Fourth Dream told him they would protect him diligently in secret. He could certainly see how diligent they were.

Nevertheless, Vaan did not expose them immediately. He was fascinated with observing their divine power. The effect of invisibility wasn't just limited to their bodies but also their area.

It was an invisible barrier that also included sound insulation, preventing the noises within from escaping outside and exposing their hidden location.

However, Vaan could hear them just fine.

Fourth Dream displayed quite a rowdy and energetic demeanor in her game of cards, which was not present when she was in front of him. Her solemn elegance was just an act of formality, while this side of her seemed to be her true self in normal times.

"Double ten? Nice! Double Jack! Take that!" Fourth Dream slammed a pair of cards down and guffawed, "Muahahaha! I'm out of cards first! I don't have to take care of the first shift!"

Evidently, the trio was competing in cards to determine the order of their shift.

Vaan smiled wryly.

It wasn't an understatement when Hecate said their experience and maturity would be inferior to his.

They seemed quite playful despite being exalted Late-stage Rank 6 Divine Beings.

Hecate had certainly left quite the dynamic trio to him. Vaan wondered if the other Dreamcatchers also had such peculiar personalities.

'I guess I'll tease them a bit now,' Vaan thought with amusement.

"Aiyo, Lady Hecate left three powerful divine bodyguards to protect me, but they disappeared so quickly. Why do I feel like they ran off somewhere to play cards?" Vaan seemingly mumbled to himself.

However, the dynamic trio immediately froze in the middle of their heated card game.

Shortly after, Fourth Dream emerged from her invisibility state and coughed awkwardly, "Ahem, that's a serious accusation you have there. Please don't question my professional ethics."

"Oh," Vaan uttered nonchalantly before saying, "I'm just casually spewing nonsense, Lady Fourth Dream. No need to take it seriously."

Fourth Dream didn't know whether to laugh or cry at his comment.

Why was his casual nonsense so darn accurate?

Chapter 786: Exposed

While Vaan was interacting with Hecate, the leaders from the human, witch, dragon, and wyvern sides all maintained their distance. No matter what Vaan and Hecate were discussing, they didn't believe they were qualified to join in.

Who would dare jump into a Great Devil's conversation before permission was granted?

As such, Astoria and Henrietta's first thoughts were to seek information about the situation from Ophelia. However, the latter found it extremely inappropriate to interrupt Hecate for a sudden inquiry.

In the end, everyone could only wait patiently until Hecate and Vaan finished their business.

When everyone witnessed Hecate's sudden surge of evil aura, they all felt fortunate for deciding not to approach her and interrupt her business.

As expected, a Great Devil was still a Great Devil.

Because of Hecate's incredibly heavy evil aura, Emperor Varan grew especially nervous regarding the future of his country. After all, they might have gotten rid of Abaddon, but now there was Hecate.

Fighting fire with fire wouldn't necessarily stop them from getting burned.

Fortunately, Emperor Varan's concerns were unfounded. He quickly felt relieved to see Hecate depart with most of her Dreamcatchers.

Even so, no one approached Vaan due to the remaining Dreamcatchers.

Only after Fourth Dream, Seventh Dream, and Ninth Dream disappeared for some time did they finally come forward.

"Lord Vaan, how is the situation?" Emperor Varan asked nervously.

Vaan glanced at Emperor Varan before casually replying, "The threat from Gehenna has been resolved. Hecate has taken charge of the Evernight Territory and put up a ban on dimension crossing."

"Thus, you no longer need to worry about the Vampire Lords invading again, Emperor Varan. With the black pillar in place, the weaker vampires won't be able to cross over either."

"Take this chance to rebuild your imperial capital, construct a defensive perimeter around the black pillar, relocate the affected citizens, and provide disaster relief."

"The Black Rose Kingdom, Holy Knight Empire, and Red Dragon Clan will aid your country's recovery. You can discuss the details with Henrietta, Astoria, and Lord Astarot," Vaan stated.

Emperor Varan suddenly knelt down and said, "On behalf of the Great Ratholos Empire, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart, Lord Vaan. I am fully convinced the Great Ratholos Empire will not suffer under you."

"The Great Ratholos Empire hereby pledges its allegiance to you, Lord Vaan," Emperor Varan said solemnly.

Although Hecate ultimately came to help, Vaan had still engaged with Great Devil Abaddon for so long and survived unscathed despite their vast difference in power.

That was an irrefutable fact.

As such, there was not a single warrior from the Great Ratholos Empire's side who wouldn't acknowledge him. He fully deserved everyone's respect and reverence.

Although Emperor Varan still had no idea how Vaan contacted Hecate, it no longer mattered to him.

What mattered was that the threat from Gehenna had been resolved, and they could move forward.

"Overlord Vaan!"

"Overlord Vaan!"

"Overlord Vaan!"

It was unknown who shouted it first, but many warriors quickly joined in once it was spoken, offering their respects and veneration to Vaan through their repeated chant.

At the same time, Vaan could feel countless faith energy pouring into him.

Although the amount of faith energy needed to forge the divine soul and officially step into the divine was enormous—to the point that Vaan had no interest in becoming divine through this method, he still wouldn't refuse the tribute.

After all, the power of faith could also affect his destiny and fate, increasing his chances of surviving tribulations and disasters.

"Don't mind the formalities. Do what you need to do, Emperor Varan."

"Understood, Overlord Vaan."

Shortly after Emperor Varan excused himself, he dragged the Sea Emperor and Princess Dana away to discuss some things, lest they had differing opinions on the legacy of the Armstrong family falling under an outsider's control.

Meanwhile, Vaan was quickly surrounded by his own people. He knew they had doubts and concerns, so he took his time explaining the situation to them.

However, their concerns only increased after learning about the situation from him.

They couldn't imagine how much pressure Vaan was enduring under his calmness. If it were them, they wouldn't remain so nonchalant, knowing they became potentially targeted by all the Great Devils.

Moreover, Vaan had to raise his strength to the peak of Rank 6 Divine Being and become one of the Great Devils to overcome this disaster.

The concept of becoming divine was virtually foreign to them.

Thus, how could it be easy?

Victoria's face paled after learning everything. She couldn't even feel happy about everyone prematurely recognizing her grandson as the overlord of Pangea.

Behind all the glory was sacrifice after sacrifice.

Her grandson took in the bloodlines of a dragon and wolf to acquire the power to survive. Now, to ensure survival and secure a future for Pangea, he would have to take in the bloodline of the vampires.

Her grandson was losing his humanity one step at a time – Victoria couldn't help but tear up at that thought.

She couldn't give him a normal childhood; now, she couldn't spoil him either.

Vaan had too much burden.

"Don't worry, Grandmother. I don't find myself pitiful. On the contrary, I am quite fortunate," Vaan honestly admitted.

If he was still living on Earth, he might have wanted to be spoiled and live a normal life.

However, he was currently living in Pangea, where the future wasn't guaranteed. As such, he naturally preferred taking every opportunity to grow stronger, no matter what became of him.

If Hecate truly had a method to incorporate Abaddon's bloodline into him without conflicting or weakening his existing bloodline, then it was his ideal choice.

After all, he believed achieving the divine body first was more beneficial in the long run.

A stronger vessel would accommodate stronger power – There should be some truth to this saying.

"There are a few things I want to settle before I head to Hecate's Dreamdust Territory. So, I will be returning to Sunpeak City first," Vaan stated.

"Alright," Henrietta and Astoria nodded with understanding.

Although they wanted to follow him, they knew they had to stay back for a bit longer to discuss disaster relief and support with Emperor Varan.

Nevertheless, even at that moment, Henrietta found it difficult to be normal around Vaan; she could feel her body heating up. However, she did her best to suppress her jittery emotions and maintain her composure.

Victoria had already learned about their relationship with her grandson.

Although she noticed they were trying to hide it from her, she couldn't find the mood to tease them.

However, the same couldn't be said for Vaan, who was aware of the heavy atmosphere and wanted to lighten it. He also noticed his grandmother had some friendship with Henrietta and Astoria.

As such, he was amused to discover they were trying to hide their relationship from his grandmother. After all, he had already spilled the beans to her.

'Ah, ignorance is bliss,' Vaan thought.

Suddenly, Vaan boldly pulled Henrietta and Astoria into his embrace and gave each of them a quick peck on the cheeks in front of his grandmother, taking them all by surprise.

Victoria originally wanted to take her time teasing Henrietta and Astoria until they realized she knew of their relationship.

However, Vaan's stunt brought everything to light, ending her little game.

Nevertheless, Vaan's killer move soon followed. After giving Henrietta and Astoria smooches, he squeezed their round buttocks.

"Mm..."

"Kyaa!"

Two different reactions sounded.

Astoria's face quickly reddened with embarrassment while Henrietta lost all strength and plopped on the ground after squealing. Her soul also seemed to have left her body at that moment.

At the same time, they felt more conscious of Victoria's gaze, which seemed to burn into their backs.

They didn't know how to face Victoria after being exposed like that.

"Alright, you ladies have fun. I'm off," Vaan chuckled and departed, washing his hands of the mess he had created.

Aeliana and Eniwse also left with him, followed by Ophelia and Lord Narvim.

Shortly after, Lord Astarot led the dragons away to help the humans in the imperial capital, not wanting to stay after sensing the strange atmosphere.

The Supreme Leader was the future overlord of Pangea. If he wanted the world to burn, then everyone was screwed.

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Soon, it was just Astoria, Henrietta, and Victoria left. Blank looks hung on their faces, having yet to adapt to the present situation.

An awkward silence filled the dry air.

"Victoria, i-it's not what you think..." Henrietta recovered some of her wits and quickly made an excuse, looking frantic.

Meanwhile, Victoria looked at Henrietta's expression and found it difficult to remain dispirited.

"Pfth!" Victoria laughed and asked, "Even after reaching this point, you're still trying to hide your relationship from me, Little Hennie?"

"Ah! Stop it. Don't talk like that," Henrietta blocked her ears in denial.

"I also wanted to keep feigning ignorance and play along with you longer, but... Sigh, that grandson of mine doesn't know how to let people have fun, does he?" Victoria sighed with some regret.

"Y-You... knew?" Astoria uttered with surprise.

"Some time ago, yeah. Vaan told me himself," Victoria chuckled before urging, "Alright, let's hear it."

"Hear what?" Astoria replied with momentary bafflement.

"Hear you two calling me Grandmother," Victoria grinned with glee, adding, "Why? Do you need my help? Alright, let's practice. Repeat after me: Grand-mo-ther. Your turn."

Astoria and Henrietta shivered with hair-raising chills and goosebumps.

Chapter 787: Heavenreacher

Henrietta and Astoria couldn't change the fact that they had indeed hooked up with Victoria's grandson and already felt awkward and embarrassed about it. As such, it would have been fine if Victoria had just been considerate about their feelings.

However, not only did Victoria not consider their feelings, she was even making fun of them for her own amusement, finding pleasure in their plight.

How could their pride accept that?

"Victoria, we indeed have a relationship with Vaan, but that also doesn't change the fact that we are your peers. Stop trying to climb two generations over our heads," Astoria said in a displeased tone.

"Hahaha, what's wrong with that? I am indeed two generations ahead of you two," Victoria chuckled and said, "I've already had children and grandchildren, while you two have none. My springtime is long gone, but yours have only just begun."

"You know, you two should be thanking me for having such an amazing grandson. Otherwise, who knows if you two will ever find a partner?"

"Still, who would have thought you two would end up with my grandson, of all people?" Victoria teased, poking at their weakness.

"Please give us some face, Victoria. You make it sound like such a bad thing," Henrietta retorted.

"It's not?" Victoria's eyes widened.

Henrietta immediately choked on her words, unable to reply. Astoria opened her mouth, but no words came out either.

"Don't get me wrong; I'm just asking – Isn't it bad that you two have guarded humanity but haven't participated in the effort to increase its dwindling population, given the low fertility rate?" Victoria explained before asking, "What did you think I meant?"

"Oh, I know, I know. You thought I implied it was bad to go after your friend's grandson, right?" Victoria chuckled slyly.

Henrietta and Astoria glared at the gleeful Victoria, who was acting shamelessly. Suddenly, they found her smug face quite punchable.

Astoria and Henrietta clenched their fists while trying to restrain the urge.

The only way to deal with shameless people was to be more shameless than them or just ignore them.

"Hmph!" Henrietta and Astoria both snorted before getting away from Victoria.

"Hahaha, where are you two going? Let me come with you. I'm not done yet," Victoria laughed as she tagged along, not letting them get away. "Let us talk more about my grandson. How was that butt squeeze? Did you like it?"

"Shameless!" Henrietta and Astoria cursed with flushed faces, hastening their steps to escape.

"Bahahaha!" Victoria laughed harder.

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Black Rose Empire, Sunpeak City

When Vaan returned with everyone else who followed him, Eniwse shortly inquired, "How much time do you have before you leave for Dreamdust Territory, Vaan?"

"Hecate didn't give me an exact time. So, I suppose it can be as long as it takes for me to settle everything in Pangea; I won't leave before I unite the north and bring the age of magic to both men and women," Vaan stated.

"Does building that enormous magic tower play a part in that plan of yours, Sir Vaan?" Ophelia asked curiously before commenting, "It looks like you are trying to build a heavenly staircase."

The 10,000-foot tower atop Red Goblin Mountain was the first thing she noticed upon stepping into Sunpeak City. Given its enormity, it would be strange not to notice it.

It was also her first time seeing such a ridiculously high magic tower.

Nevertheless, Vaan saw no reason to hide the truth.

The 10,000-foot magic tower was bound to one of Pangea's historical wonders, and its fame would eventually spread to every inch of the continent and attract many magic-engineering scholars from the Freedom Federation.

"You're right, but also wrong, Lady Ophelia. Not quite a heavenly staircase. Calling it a space launcher would be more accurate," Vaan replied.

Originally, he did, in fact, want to build a space elevator.

It was one of his minor desires to see it become a reality, and nothing would have been more satisfying than personally leading the project to fruition.

However, it also realized it was impractical—not because the theory was flawed, but because it would be wasteful. After all, the sheer amount of resources required to construct the space elevator was astronomical.

More importantly, it wouldn't last long.

The geographic changes brought by Pangea merging with Gehenna would, without doubt, compromise its structural integrity and stability. Once that happened, it was bound to fall apart and come crashing down on the growing city beneath it.

The potential losses weren't worth the investment.

As such, Vaan revised the project to a cost-effective space launcher that wouldn't be possible with just science.

"A space launcher?" Ophelia raised her eyebrow before expressing her interest, "I would like to hear more about it, Sir Vaan."

"Why don't I give you a tour of it while we're at it, Lady Ophelia?" Vaan suggested.

"That would be great."

"Alright."

Shortly after, they relocated to the foot of the 10,000-foot magic tower, which was also a space launcher. Its center was hollow, like the tube of a big cannon, and a huge bullet-shaped containment was fitted inside.

Although Vaan was surprised by the progress made in his absence, he explained, "This is the hard shell that will carry people into the sea of stars; it's currently designed with twenty-five passenger seats and a maximum cargo weight of fifty tons."

"This space launcher utilizes strong kinetic power to thrust the metal shell straight into the sea of stars. However, it's also because we are using such a straightforward method of transport that not anyone can use it for the time being."

"Unless one is Senior Witch, Aura Grandmaster, or someone trained to withstand 10g of force for twenty minutes, they will not be able to withstand the pressure of the launch," Vaan explained.

Of course, they were still working on the carrier's pressure-cancellation system to negate all feelings of travel for the comfort of the passengers and for transporting more fragile objects into space.

But before that, there was also the black pillar, which would be great for training people to endure high pressure.

Nevertheless, Ophelia couldn't help but frown after listening to Vaan's explanation. It didn't seem plausible to her.

Chapter 788: Heavenreacher (2)

"I'm sorry, Sir Vaan. I don't want to question your intelligence or discredit the efforts you put into this project," Ophelia said before expressing her honest opinion, "However, it just doesn't seem plausible to me."

"I don't see how such a heavy object can be sent into the sea of stars if it only relies purely on the kinetic power inputted during launch. It will be unable to overcome its weight and will be brought down by Pangea's gravity."

"Of course, if the kinetic power of the launch was so high that it could send the carrier into the sea of stars, I believe such launching power would be able to slay even Divine Beings."

"I doubt any passenger will be able to survive under such pressure. No, they'll probably die instantly upon launch if this space launcher had such kinetic power generation," Ophelia figured.

"It's just as you say, Lady Ophelia," Vaan calmly acknowledged her point before saying, "If the space launcher is only relying on pure kinetic energy to send people into the sea of stars, that is."

"So, there's more to it then?" Ophelia wondered thoughtfully.

Vaan nodded and said, "That space launcher alone will not be enough to send people into the sea of stars. That's why we are also working on creating a void tunnel system."

"A void tunnel system?" Ophelia raised her eyebrow in interest.

"That's right, a void tunnel system that would generate a pillar of void space between the space launch and the sea of stars via magic. You should have already seen the floating black cubes above the magic tower, Lady Ophelia," Vaan mentioned.

"In total, there will be 60,000 of them aligned between the space launcher and the sea of stars when the void tunnel system is online. It will create a zero-gravity vacuum space for the carriers to pass through."

"Naturally, the carrier will not lose any travel speed getting launched through such an environment. It'll be like getting pushed through deep space," Vaan stated.

"Supreme Leader, I've recalled that the void tunnel system was completed recently. It just hasn't entered the testing phase since the communication and docking systems on the other end aren't ready yet," Lord Narvim informed.

Of course, he didn't see a reason not to tag along with the tour, considering he had ample knowledge of the relevant projects.

Furthermore, the magic tower's interior was so spacious that even dragons like him could enter without feeling cramped. After all, it was designed to accommodate the large size of red dragons.

"Oh?" Vaan uttered with surprise.

Given the various projects the Red Dragon Clan was already working on, he didn't expect the void tunnel system to be completed so quickly.

Lord Narvim seemed to have noticed Vaan's thoughts. As such, he explained, "The void tunnel system is a smaller project compared to the space station project. Lord Astarot figured the space station project's progress would speed up if we completed the void tunnel system project first, so we did."

"Now, we can send even more materials into space to speed up the work on the space station project," Lord Narvim stated.

"Using spatial storage artifacts wasn't good enough?" Vaan asked.

"The spatial storage artifacts are only good enough to transport small-to-medium-size materials. It won't be able to transport larger materials required for some key parts in the space station project, Supreme Leader," Lord Narvim answered.

Vaan furrowed his brows before mentioning, "But without the space station's docking system, there won't be much point in completing the void tunnel system early."

"Or are you saying you were all planning to play catch with 50-ton alloy shells hurling through vacuum space at speed and force comparable to Demigods?" Vaan asked.

"Uh..." Lord Narvim opened his mouth and paused in silence before eventually nodding, "That was indeed the plan, Supreme Leader. Lord Astarot intended to receive the transported items himself."

"Just focus on the docking system first," Vaan ordered, feeling speechless.

Although Lord Astarot was already a Demigod and could receive the carriers with his own power, it was still quite risky.

Vaan wouldn't want a "fuck around and find out" moment to happen and delay the space station project further than the time saved through such a risky shortcut.

"Understood, Supreme Leader," Lord Narvim acknowledged.

Meanwhile, Ophelia was quite startled.

Given that Vaan's explanations were true, it was indeed possible to launch alloy carriers into the sea of stars with kinetic power. Furthermore, it required far less construction material than a heavenly staircase.

However, the complexity of magic technology and engineering involved was also a lot higher than that of the heavenly staircase.

Where did Vaan even find all the skilled magic artificers needed to pull it off? Did he mobilize the entire Red Dragon Clan for that?

The noble red dragons were indeed skilled and knowledgeable.

However, given the timeframe and progress involved, they must be working like slaves to achieve so much.

Nevertheless, Ophelia also noticed another point.

If the void tunnel system did work as intended, she couldn't imagine how much mana would be required to generate such a large zero-gravity vacuum space for even a few seconds.

"The mana consumption for maintaining the void tunnel system must be enormous, right? If this space launcher is intended to be used frequently, the mana consumption would be even greater. Wouldn't the Black Rose Kingdom run out of mana quickly?" Ophelia inquired.

"Not at all, Lady Ophelia," Vaan shook his head and said, "There's a near-limitless amount of mana lying in the upper sky, untapped until now. However, it will be used to support everything in this country, ranging from the void tunnel system to the witches' daily needs."

"And how do you intend to harvest all that mana in such large quantity, Sir Vaan?" Ophelia asked.

Vaan's bold claim had attracted her strong curiosity.

"That's what the large magic tower is for; it's not just a space launcher. Actually, the void tunnel system is only one part of a dual system," Vaan casually explained.

"When the void tunnel system is offline, the mana gathering system will be activated to channel the abundant mana from the upper sky into the magic tower's core mana storage."

"During this process, the void tunnel system will be recharged to maintain its functions," Vaan stated.

After Ophelia finally saw the full picture, she was greatly amazed.

The entire project had been thoroughly planned, and there didn't seem to be a single flaw in it.

She couldn't help but look forward to the day of its full completion.

"Does this future wonder have a name?"

"Heavenreacher."

Chapter 789: Airheads

"Heavenreacher..." Ophelia repeated thoughtfully.

It was quite a suitable name if Vaan could bring the project to life as he envisioned. Moreover, its name would shake the world at its foundation once its fame spread.

The first to flock over would be the magic-engineering scholars around the world, followed by wealthy and powerful people. There wasn't a single person in the world who wasn't curious about the world beyond the sky.

Thus, if they could afford the experience, they would certainly be willing to pay for it.

Ophelia could see the Heavenreacher Project attracting countless wealth and fame to the country once it was completed.

By then, many countries would actively reach out to the Black Rose Empire despite their zero contact in the past. It would be a huge step forward for the Black Rose Empire.

However, whether the rest of humanity would benefit from it remained to be seen.

Although Vaan initiated the project to bring humanity into the interstellar age and advance their progress by leaps and bounds, he no longer needed to wait for the completion of the Heavenreacher Project, Space Station Project, and Space Gateway Project.

His goal was to bring people to the moon to build a training base to utilize the pure mana from the other side of the dimensional crack there.

Fortunately, a highly advanced old base already existed within the moon's core. They only needed to repair it and restore its life support functions.

With his current comprehension of the Spatial Law, Vaan could take quite a lot to the moon in an instant.

"Gather fifty High Witches, thirty Peak-stage Senior Witches, and twenty students at the True Witch rank, Aeliana. Also, call Cryrena, Dahlia, and your mother over," Vaan instructed.

"Yes, Lord Vaan!" Aeliana immediately complied and departed.

Shortly after, Vaan turned to Lord Narvim, "Return the clan and bring back a hundred dragons with at least Rank 5 Magic Engineering knowledge and two hundred Airheads, Lord Narvim."

"Understood, Supreme Leader," Lord Narvim left after giving Eniwse a brief glance.

"What do you plan to do with so many airheads? Or rather, the Red Dragon Clan actually has so many airheads, Sir Vaan?" Ophelia quickly asked with pure astonishment.

"Eh? I don't think we are thinking on the same page, Lady Ophelia," Vaan replied.

"Huh? Then, what kind of airhead are you talking about?"

"An Airhead is the name of a specific magitech headgear design with the function of adjusting its size to fit the user and provide a steady supply of breathable air to them. It's an essential gear for surviving in the sea of stars, Lady Ophelia," Vaan explained.

However, Ophelia couldn't help but feel speechless.

She was originally impressed with Vaan's naming sense when she thought of Heavenreacher. However, she had to take it back after learning about Airhead.

Couldn't he have picked a better name for it?

"Teacher!"

"Vaan!"

Cyrena and Dahlia rushed over with excitement and joy while Solana lagged behind at a calm and steady pace.

Vaan nodded.

He noticed they had all made improvements in their magic power during his absence, with Cyrena showing the biggest progress.

She originally had no magic due to Aeliana's antimagic spores.

But once her ability to cultivate was unsealed, her talents bloomed in full might, especially after she practiced with his mana circulation method.

In such a short time, Cyrena had already advanced to Mid-stage Senior Witch, surpassing all her peers and catching up to academic teachers. Her speed of advancement could be considered extraordinary since the dawn of magic on Pangea.

On the other hand, Dahlia was a Peak-stage Senior Witch, and Solana stepped into the High Witch rank on her own.

"We are going to the moon. Do you have any arrangements to make before we leave?" Vaan asked.

The three ladies were immediately surprised.

There was indeed a lot of work for them to do in Sunpeak City. However, they had been working hard all this while. As such, they figured it was fine to take a break; they only needed to notify some people.

When they relayed that to Vaan, he sent them back to make arrangements.

Although Aeliana was the city lord, most of the city management work had fallen under Solana, who acted as the vice city lord.

On the other hand, Cyrena was Vaan's Potioneering student. Since he didn't have time to concoct potions himself, he gave her many potion recipes to practice with.

Those potion recipes became the very foundation of their potion shop.

As the Head Potioneer of Vaan's potion shop, Cyrena had earned herself a reputation in Sunpeak City.

Many witches would flock to their store each day to buy her potions due to their superior quality and effects compared to other potions of the same categories on the market.

Even Vaan did not know how much wealth the potion shop had accumulated for him all this while, not to mention the dividends from his deal with Lady Helia of Redpine City.

However, with the total wealth accrued in his Heaven-Swallowing Space, he was bound to be uninterested in this bit of wealth from his businesses.

The accumulated mana stones from his businesses were better off invested in the city's development and quality of life improvement. Naturally, this had been left Dahlia's charge, who had been managing the potion store and his various properties.

There wasn't a single person in Sunpeak City who didn't know about Madam Payne. She was the publicly-recognized wealthiest witch in town.

Only very few people knew that Dahlia was only managing Vaan's wealth.

After the three ladies left to free up their work schedule with substitutes, Vaan reached out to the three Dreamcatchers.

"Lady Fourth Dream, Lady Seventh Dream, and Lady Ninth Dream, what do you all think of this city? How does it compare to your hometown in the Dreamdust Territory?" Vaan asked.

"It's a lot better than the human city we were at. However, it is far inferior to our Illusory Moon City in every aspect. There is nothing worth comparing, Sir Vaan," Fourth Dream answered honestly.

Vaan nodded.

Since Hecate was so knowledgeable in many fields, it shouldn't be surprising for Illusory Moon City to develop into an unbelievably advanced place during the 10,000 years under her rule.

On the other hand, Sunpeak City was like an infant who had barely learned to walk. Although it had little to show yet, its potential was limitless.

As it would become the focal point of the Black Rose Empire in the future, it was the prime location for Hecate's first church. Given her influence, it would also provide a layer of protection to Sunpeak City once her religion took form.

Since he permitted her to establish her religion anywhere within his area of influence, how could he not take advantage of her influence for his own benefit?

In this case, both parties would benefit if a church of Hecate was built here.

Hecate's influence would add an additional layer of protection to the Heavenreacher from potential saboteurs. On the other hand, Hecate's worshippers would get a large population of witches to convert.

"But you have been quietly listening to the Heavenreacher Project. As such, you should be aware of this city's future developments. Would Lady Hecate like her official church to be built here?" Vaan asked.

"This... We will have to ask Lady Hecate about it," Fourth Dream replied with uncertainty. She couldn't make the decision for her mistress.

"We'll put a hold on that topic then," Vaan nodded.

Fourth Dream was immediately relieved and concerned at the same time.

She wasn't sure how to respond if Vaan pressed the matter since she couldn't give him an answer. Her mistress had cut off contact since returning to Illusory Moon City a moment ago.

As such, no one could reach Hecate, not even Ophelia or her other Devil's Contractor.

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Sometime later, Cyrena, Dahlia, and Solana finished settling their businesses and returned. Lord Narvim and Aeliana also brought over Vaan's requirements as instructed.

Vaan spotted Sabrina, Louise, Cassandra, and Alicia among the True Witch-level students. They were all Redpine Academy students who had dual-practiced with him before.

However, they were still stuck at Peak-stage True Witch and had not entered the Senior Witch rank.

Although they had made some progress since he had last seen them, it was still small compared to Cyrena and the others. As such, he made a mental note to assist them on this trip if they had not broken their contracts.

He'd make sure to check later.

Vaan gave them a nod of acknowledgment after they made eye contact. He could see longing and excitement in their gazes.

"Since everyone is here, we'll prepare to depart. Lord Narvim, have your clan members distribute the Airheads to everyone and teach them how to use them."

"Yes, Supreme Leader."

On the side, Ophelia's lips twitched. She doubted she would ever get used to hearing such a name for a magitech gear.

Twenty minutes later, everyone became familiar with their Airheads amid their astonishment with their functions.

The Airheads were designed to cover the red dragon's entire head. But when used by the witches, they covered their whole bodies like skin-tight, elastic glass suits without producing any discomfort.

It was quite magical.

Everyone quickly became interested in the special materials used to produce the Airheads. However, they weren't given the extra time to study further.

"Since everyone is ready, let us depart at once," Vaan stated.

With a downward stroke of his hand, a large-scale spatial portal dropped from above and swallowed everyone, bringing them all to the moon's core on the other side.

Chapter 790: Great Devil Conference

Gehenna Realm, Dreamdust Territory

Shortly after Hecate returned to Illusory Moon City with her six Dreamcatchers and three Vampiress Lords, darkness encroached on the land.

An unprecedented sense of gloom and oppression weighed on the myriad races living within the prosperous city. The liveliness and bustling activities throughout the busy streets ceased, and an ominous sense of fear crept into everyone's heart.

It was like the Grim Reaper's hand had latched onto their hearts, ready to crush them with a squeeze at a moment's notice.

"W-What's going on?!" a Transcendent-rank Dark Fairy cried with alarm and dread.

Illusory Moon City had never experienced such large-scale ominous phenomena since its founding. Moreover, many residents have never encountered difficulties or danger due to its high quality of life and strict stability.

Anywhere could be attacked, but not Illusory Moon City; it was hidden in the heart of Dreamdust Territory and was the safest place to live.

As such, their fear was amplified when they encountered such a dreadful aura covering the whole city.

Meanwhile, Hecate knew who the all-encompassing aura belonged to. There was only one being in Gehenna with such a dreadful aura of death – Thanatos.

Although the deathly aura seemed to threaten to take everyone's life in the blink of an eye, she also knew the Supreme Great Devil wouldn't take a life so easily as long as she didn't defy his will.

Of course, there was only a thin line between a threat and a death sentence; the choice was hers to make.

"Hecate, your immediate presence is required at the Great Devil Conference. Will you agree or decline?" Thanatos's voice eerily resounded throughout the Dreamdust Territory.

"I agree!" Hecate resolutely shouted at the sky.

Naturally, she had no other choice—not with Thanatos's death power looming over everyone's head like a Sword of Damocles, ready to be dropped at any time.

Although she didn't want to believe Thanatos would wipe out the Dreamdust Territory's population because of a single disagreement, she didn't intend to find out. After all, she would still lose something even if she didn't lose everything.

A hefty price would be paid for defiance.

Nevertheless, after Thanatos received Hecate's answer, his deathly aura retracted from her Dreamdust Territory like a receding tide.

Even so, many people were still inflicted with lingering fear.

"So that's the power of a Realm Lord..." Third Dream slightly shuddered with a mix of dread and astonishment.

She was already a Late-stage Rank 6 Divine Being, but her power was nowhere near that of Thanatos, who was at the peak of Rank 6 Divine Being.

After all, besides Thanatos, no other Divine Being in Gehenna could cover an entire territory with their divine aura.

Even Hecate, who was at the same level, couldn't match his seemingly boundless power. It was not a matter of quality but sheer quantity; it didn't seem like The Supreme Great Devil's divine power could be exhausted.

This was because Thanatos was bound to Gehenna and could draw its power for himself.

The power of a single Rank 6 Divine Being was nothing compared to an entire realm.

"Mistress, are you really going to attend the Great Devil Conference?" First Dream asked with concern.

"I don't have a choice. I must meet the other Great Devils and give them a proper explanation. Otherwise, Sir Vaan's life will be in danger, and our territory will also suffer," Hecate calmly stated.

First Dream frowned and said, "I don't understand, Mistress. Why go so far for a human you just met?"

"I wonder about that myself," Hecate smiled before shaking her head, saying, "Actually, it's not a complicated reason. I had something he needed, and he also had something I needed; we are helping each other for that purpose."

"Do you know why I have chosen to leave my powerful clan and settle down in this backwater realm alone for the past ten thousand years?" Hecate asked.

"Mistress once mentioned that because of your unique soul constitution, you would never be able to step into Rank 7. However, Mistress's grandmother divined that you could find your destiny-changing opportunity in Gehenna, which was why you came here," First Dream recalled.

"That's right, and I have found it," Hecate admitted before adding, "My bottleneck is already no more, and my ascension to Rank 7 is only a matter of time, First Dream."

"Congratulations, Mistress! Your long-cherished wish has been achieved!" First Dream rejoiced, feeling happy for Hecate.

There wasn't a single Dreamcatcher that didn't feel the same way.

Each of them used to be a no-name, living in some slum region scattered throughout Gehenna.

However, their Mistress found them, brought them back to Illusory Moon City, fed them, taught them, and trained them. Without their Mistress, they would not have their present achievements.

To them, their Mistress wasn't just their benefactor and teacher but their mother. As such, they were eternally grateful to her.

"Mm," Hecate nodded before saying, "It's hard to say how long this Great Devil Conference will take, but I will most likely be gone for a while. I will have to entrust you and the Dreamcatchers with managing Dreamdust Territory in my absence."

"You can leave it to us, Mistress! We will not let you down!" Second Dream answered.

They have followed Hecate for a long time and learned how to manage Dreamdust Territory long ago. Whether Hecate actively managed her domain or not would not change anything.

Perhaps Hecate taught them to be competent with everything, foreseeing that she would leave Gehenna one day.

However, should that day ever come, they wouldn't want to stay behind; they would rather follow her.

"Alright, I am counting on all of you," Hecate said before suddenly reminding them, "Make sure the Sixth Progenitor, Eleventh Progenitor, and Thirteenth Progenitor feel at home and teach them the ropes around Illusory Moon City."

"We will, Mistress," First Dream promised.

Hecate nodded.

Shortly after, she departed Illusion Moon City and headed to the Great Devil Conference without further delay.

...

Out of Gehenna's seven habitable planets and two uninhabitable planets, the Great Devil Conference has always been held on one of the two uninhabitable planets—the Purpleflame Territory.

The Purpleflame Territory was, as its name suggested, a place filled with purple flames burning eternally.

In the distant past, the Purpleflame Territory used to be a beautiful green planet filled with lush vegetation and plant life. Only forty percent of its surface was covered with water.

As such, it boasted the highest production of magic plants used for medicine, alchemy, and potioning, among other fields.

The Purpleflame Territory's renown was so great that it also spread to neighboring realms and even reached the eyes and ears of the ruling Skymagia Star Kingdom.

As a result, it eventually became one of the Skymagia Star Kingdom's strategic resource points, allowing it to enjoy unparalleled status in Gehenna.

Unfortunately, its glorious days did not last forever.

A beloved son of the Purpleflame Territory's ruler harmed a royal princess of the star kingdom during one of her visits, incurring the wrath of the entire Skymagia Star Kingdom.

Due to conflicting opinions regarding the truth of the scandal, a great war quickly broke out on the planet.

However, the Purpleflame Territory's strength could never compare to the might of the Skymagia Star Kingdom's forces. Thus, after losing miserably, it was reduced to its current state.

Although it was never confirmed, the Purpleflame Territory adamantly believed the scandal with the Skymagia Star Kingdom's royal princess was a scheme of the Divinesun Star Kingdom until the very end.

As such, many beings also believed the Purpleflame Territory's fiery demon spirits that emerged after its destruction were the evil spirits of those who had died unjustly.

Although many star arrays leading to the Purpleflame Territory still existed, its visitors were no longer the same as they were in its heyday.

It had become a tempering ground for those looking to train or gain battle experience against the fiery demon spirits.

...

On a tall, rocky black mountain, with an overall good view of the desolate land eternally ravaged by purple flames, a Stonehenge was found with seats around a rock table in the center.

Thanatos made this place the Great Devil Conference's location in remembrance of all who had died in the Purpleflame Territory.

Among those who served the Purpleflame Territory's ruler and fell in battle, there were countless more uninvolved innocent lives that did not partake in the war. They did not deserve to die, but they were killed regardless, simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The Skymagia Star Kingdom was certainly ruthless in maintaining its authority over its vassal star realms.

"No matter how often I've come to this place, I can always feel its lingering gloom and despair... Alas, this is a blood debt Gehenna can never claim back."

Great Devil Mephistopheles glanced at the scenery with nonchalance before turning to an undead lich cloaked in endless darkness.

"What do you think, Thanatos?"

"Pick your words carefully, Mephisto. You should know that loose lips sink ships. The Skymagia Star Kingdom might suspect Gehenna is plotting a rebellion against it due to those words of yours."

"Yeah, yeah... Can you at least address me by my full name, Thanatos? I'm still a Great Devil with some dignity, you know?"

"It's too long, and I am too lazy, Mephi."

"..."